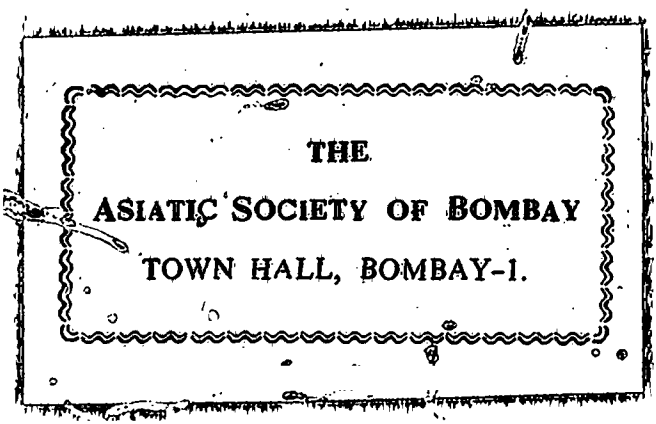
God
265.8
Kel/Chr
111767



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016

00111767

1767

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, [let us wait] on [our] ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. xii. 6–8).

I HAVE purposely taken a scripture in an epistle familiar to us all, where we have gifts brought into prominence which were not on one hand for mere signs to the world, nor on the other that character of foundation gift which was limited to the earliest days of the church of God upon the earth. At least no apostles are specially named among the gifts of our chapter. Thus it is evident that our list differs on both sides (whether looking at the world as the sphere of God's remarkable manifestations of power, or looking at the church as requiring what was special in order to its first establishment on the earth); and this because of a design here different from that of 1 Cor. xii. or of Eph. iv. We have what is called the ordinary ministry required for the good of the saints, rather than the manifestation of God's power in man by the Spirit in witness of the risen Lord, or of Christ's love

to His body in its fulness, and in principle too till the completeness of His work on the earth. From the choice of such a scripture every one will see that my object is a practical one. It is to search simply and honestly, as in the sight of God, into the true nature of Christian ministry,—of ministry such as we need to know it and to have it freely exercised in our midst,—such as we ought to acknowledge, if we are to be found faithful as the children of God in presence of so great a blessing.

You will see therefore, that it is here assumed—as, I trust, unnecessary to be proved particularly now—that Christian ministry is a permanent institution. It is agreed that Christian ministry, not in all its forms, but in substance and in its essential nature as it was given from the beginning, was not intended to be withdrawn till the close of God's work here below as now known in Christianity. We are not going to enter into curious questions as to what preceded Christianity, nor to occupy ourselves with anything that is to follow after Christianity has accomplished its mighty task. For the present I hold myself, and would direct your attention, to that which is connected with our constant place of privilege and duty every day. As this will greatly simplify the subject, so at the same time it is quite evident that it concerns every Christian.

I define Christian ministry, then, to be, according to the word of God, the exercise of a spiritual gift. Ministry in the word is the exercise of a gift which has the word for its subject-matter. It may embrace, no doubt, different spheres, but it brings the word of

God to bear upon souls, whether converted or unconverted. Confessedly, when we look at the converted, ministry has by no means the same simple character as the gospel addressed to the unconverted. If then Christian ministry in the word be divided into two great departments, namely, towards the world on the one hand, and towards the church or Christian body on the other, it is clear that, whereas towards the world it is really summed up in evangelizing or proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God towards men, towards the church it is a more varied and complex matter. Here we must leave room for distinctions of very great importance.

That these are the two greater departments of ministry in the word, few Christians will be disposed to question, or to require proofs at length. The thing is all but self-evident. Thus the word of God is perfectly plain as to evangelizing. Our Lord Jesus, before He left the world, directed His servants to preach the gospel to every creature. He told them to go and make disciples of all nations—the Gentiles, "baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." He bid them proclaim repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. He charged them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation. Is it not evident that this was ministry to those without, and that it has for its aim the making known the name of God, as now fully revealed in Christianity, and the glad news of redemption to every creature whom they could reach? Accordingly, among the most prominent of His servants, are seen the

apostles themselves. Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost to the thousands that gathered after the astonishing sign was shown of the sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven. This arrested universal attention: men flocked to know what this wonder was; and the apostle Peter explained all from the Jewish Prophets and Psalms. But he did more. He preached the glad tidings. He showed them the way to be saved; he set forth Jesus as the one and only possible means for a sinful man, and then of course, to men of Judea and of Israel. He was addressing such as had gathered at that time to the great feast of Pentecost—strangers from every nation under heaven, but still Jews; to whom he set forth Jesus as the Messiah (above all His death and cross, resurrection and ascension) made Lord and Christ; for all these and more are brought before us in one way or another, and are substantially the same great truth of His rejection by Israel and His exaltation by God, though it is quite admitted that the whole subject is testimony to Jesus and hence of far larger bearing than simply the way for a sinner to be brought to God.

In preaching we should avoid too nice distinctions. It is wise to be direct, simple, and thorough, in affectionately pressing with solemn earnestness the broad facts of Christ and redemption. It may be all well among the children of God to point out the various lights and shades in the truth of God; but, in my judgment, refinement in evangelizing spoils the message of Divine grace. As God is simple in His dealing with souls, so should we be as servants, not seeking to please men or ourselves. The same apostle

Paul, who was inspired to lead into all the heights and depths of God's counsels and ways, when helping on the children of God, appears in the Acts of the Apostles, coming down to a gospel of such simplicity as many preachers would hardly think of giving out. He takes his stand on the facts of Christ, His death and resurrection; but he also takes care to meet them exactly where they were, where for instance he cites the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons as witnesses of God's goodness, against degrading and selfish demon-gods, even when all the nations were suffered to go their own ways. These suffice to tell of His beneficence who now sent them the glad tidings of Jesus. For we are not to suppose that we have all reported, but some special point urged in divine wisdom: the wants of a sinner's heart cannot be met by rain from heaven; nor can a soul now, still less in view of God and eternity, be satisfied by present goodness in this world, however rich. Nevertheless it is wholesome and important to note how the apostle takes up the poor heathen, and presents to them (from what was before their eyes, or in their own consciousness) testimony to a power infinitely superior to the creature. To a heathen, who had not the written word, the analogy of God's care for the body was no mean argument from which to proceed to tell the love of God to the soul, and thus the whole story of Divine grace. To my mind there is no less wisdom than simplicity in such a method, which we might do well to cultivate.

The same apostle Paul, speaking to the Jews, does not enter into the question of the outward creation, or the

nature of man here below, forgetful of his truest dignity (Acts xiv. xvii., end). He takes them up to the Old Testament (Acts xiii. xvii., beginning); shows them the Messiah, His death, resurrection, and kingdom, required by the positive word of God with which they were so familiar, and then compares the facts of the life and death of the Lord Jesus, as the only answer to what the Law and the Psalms and the Prophets prepare us for. All this clearly shows the singleness of purpose, and consequently the union of depth and plainness in the presentation found in scripture. For it is a mistake to suppose that those most profoundly taught are necessarily the hardest to understand. The reverse was true in the apostle's case.

When people are imperfectly instructed, they are apt to be in a cloud both of thought and words; and often fancy that, because they are scarcely intelligible, they must be very deep. The truth is that, where there is the certainty of the known truth, you can afford to be simple; and where there is adequate power to give out as the rule, so the hearers will find it. There will be real depth according to spiritual power and acquaintance with God. It is inconceivable, when one enters really into what God is, as revealed in the glorious person of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and His work and His position, that there will not come out what is of God above the thoughts of flesh and blood. Ordinarily however, the greater the intimacy with God, the more will there be simplicity with man; and although simplicity can very well cohere with depth, we must remember that depth is a very different thing from obscurity.

Now the apostles were not muddy, but perspicuous and plain. Their manner was direct, personal, positive.

They had before their souls the most momentous truth from God for man, and this distinctly seen. They had the deepest conviction of man's ruin and of God's grace; they had before their eyes in the fullest and the clearest light who Jesus is and what the Rejected of men did and suffered in atonement, and what God could, would, and did work through Christ the Lord, for poor sinners. This formed the staple of their teaching. This is the gospel. This is the glad tidings of a Saviour, and more particularly of Him displayed in the mightiest work, the only one indeed, which could at all, which does fully, meet the sinner's wants, namely the work of redemption.

But this clears the way at once. There is first of all the ministry of the gospel, next there is the ministry of the church. But when we come to look at the ministry of the church, there are many different kinds of it. Take for instance what we have in the verses read. "Having, then, gifts differing," as it is said, "according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith, or ministry, [let us engage] in ministry, or he that teacheth, in teaching; or he that exhorteth, in exhortation. He that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity (or, liberality); he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Any thoughtful mind will see that this is not at all the way in which man would have written of Christian ministry. Is it too much to say that not a single individual in all the world would of himself have written as the apostle has done here? If so, do you think that this was not meant to instruct us? Is it not a notable

fact, while he introduces that which no one could dispute to be of the highest character of Christian ministry (for instance, prophesying), that at the same time he brings in exhortation; and again he mingles with this a kind of ministry which has nothing directly to do with public instruction in the word, while nevertheless, it is emphatically called "ministry;" and again he adds to them, yet distinct from all, ruling or taking the lead. Many Christians seem to be greatly afraid of ruling. They are jealous lest its admission might compromise what they consider the scriptural principles of Christians. They would do better to sink every principle which cannot face the word of God. They would do better simply and fully to trust what God has given and revealed. Be assured that the Lord knows how to keep up principles for us far better than we for Him. He classes ruling along with the other forms of ministry. This should be enough for the believer. It is in no way bound up with an authority which does not exist any longer.

But there is another matter to which I call your attention. Giving is a kind of ministry that is often deficient, not receiving, but giving. Again, it is another gift to show mercy. They are both admirable kinds of ministry. At the same time they are not assuredly the forms of ministry that men would have joined with prophesying and ruling: nobody would have thought of such an association. What are we then to infer from all? This at least, I think, that God is much larger, simpler, more real, than we are—that He counts as a part of the wondrous work that He is carrying on in the church a great many services that we

do not call ministry and have not in general regarded as any gifts at all. Ought we not then to be guided in these things by God's word?

This brings me to an important principle that I desire to press and always hold fast as well as to urge on others; that ministry is not any mere qualification which we have naturally—that no ability that any man can have is what constitutes the force of ministry. Ministry always depends on a positive gift from the Lord. Do I mean then, by this, to set aside natural abilities or acquired qualifications, more particularly since we have been Christians? In no wise. It is an equal error to confound gift with qualification, and to deny that qualification is of any consequence to gift. Let us believe both, but maintain, according to the word of God, that gift is entirely in itself distinct from those qualities which nevertheless may be necessary for the due working of the gift. The Lord has Himself set this forth in a remarkable parable (Matthew xxv. 14-30), which may be referred to for a moment, because the matter is put with such decision that it is hard to see how any one can fairly evade its force. We learn thence that Christ was as a man travelling in a far country who called his own servants and delivered to them his goods. It is not merely God in His condescension making use of *our* goods, which is also quite true. He knows well that the Lord does so. But this is not the point of the parable. The Lord delivered to these servants *His* goods. This was when He went up to heaven. For His country, according to the style of Matthew's Gospel, is the land of Israel. He is regarded as Jehovah-Messiah from chapter i. Palestine therefore was His land. Accordingly

heaven, in the point of view of this Gospel, is the far country. Going away, then, He delivered them His goods, "and unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one,—to every man according to his several ability." Two things are here evidently distinct. The ability of the servants is recognised in its place, but the goods of Christ are still more manifest on the other side. In short the Lord does not give the same kind of gift to different servants. Who ever yet saw two men that had the same? Far from fighting with these differences, it seems to me in beautiful harmony with Christianity, and has immense practical importance. Every servant of the Lord has a gift suitable to his own ability; and hence, as the ability of servants differs, so also does the gift. Thus, even though for instance the Lord might give the gift of evangelizing to many, as He does, they do not receive it in the same form or measure. Every evangelist has his own line of work, according to his peculiar gift, in presenting the truth. Is this a matter to find fault with? Much rather should we thank God for it. Miserable is the ministry of one man following another. I grant you it is the constant tendency of narrow minds. They have got an ideal before them, such as it is—good, bad, or indifferent—some favourite of theirs by whom each is judged, and to whom they would like every one else to be conformed. Their norm for the church and for those who minister would be to resemble a regiment of soldiers, of the same height, or as nearly the same as possible, and with the self-same dress and drill. But this is sadly discordant from the will of the Lord, who gives in no case the same gift in mode or degree, but

to each as He will. The right working of Christ's ministry depends on this—"Having then gifts *differing*," followed by its different forms. And this is so true, that, even though the gifts may be to the same end, yet take any one of them—evangelists, pastors, teachers, —and it will be found that they have each their own individuality as servants of the Lord. They have each their own ability, to which grace adapts the gift of the Lord Jesus; for His gift is evidently suitable to the particular vessel in which it is placed. This serves a weighty purpose of God in the church, on which I may touch a little more when we come to see how it has been abused and perverted. For thus man always tends, under every possible circumstance, to trench upon, and hinder, and spoil the blessed work the Spirit of God would carry on for the glory of Christ. Let it suffice to point out the broad principle at the present.

It has been shown, then, that gift is not to be confounded with ability; that ability is not to be denied because of gift; that the two things are perfectly consistent; and that our Lord Himself is the authority for both. Our Lord intimates that He gives His goods according to the several abilities of the servants. We shall find there is more than this, important guard as it is against both unbelief and fanaticism; but we must reserve each for its own place.

This, then, is the first element I desire to press as to ministry in the word, that there are "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." It is not therefore according to the education of the man, or the will of others. Popes and patrons, prelates and congregations, have no voice in scripture as to ministry

in the word. Its title is directly and immediately derived from One immeasurably above them all. As to the source of the gift, everything depends upon the Giver. This is of immense moment. The gift comes from Christ—from Christ alone—not from the church in part, any more than wholly. Nor should the church presume to sanction formally what comes from the Lord Christ, as if He needed her countersign.

But further, this principle decides its place in another way; for, properly speaking, Christian ministry began with Christ's ascending up to heaven. He designated apostles while He was upon the earth; He sent out seventy persons with a last message to Israel; but the same New Testament which tells us these facts declares that, when He ascended up on high, He gave gifts. Both facts are true; they are not to be arrayed one against another, which is what infidelity does, though sometimes well-meaning ignorance does so too. But if we do not know, we should seek to learn; for ignorance in divine things often exposes souls to the assaults and influence of infidelity. Though far from being the same thing, we should bear in mind that ignorance of the mind of God does expose to the inroads of the enemy, who takes advantage of it.

However this may be, we see what a place Christian ministry has. It began when Christ had done with the earth, consequent on the accomplishment of redemption. He had come down to the earth, but it was to test man. A man, He lived among men here below, manifesting the Father in the midst of darkness; but it too surely proved that man would not have Him—yea, hated both Him and the Father. The end of that

was the cross. Risen from the dead, He acts in power —not merely in testimony, but efficaciously; and this too, not only in power over the body, but in full delivering energy, first for the soul, by and by for the body, conforming it to Himself in the glory of resurrection. Meanwhile, exalted above, He works by the Spirit of God sent down to maintain His glory and give effect to His grace. In the practical working out of this He gives gifts as He will, and these constitute the ground of true Christian ministry. When He rose from the dead, He commenced a new thing; as it is said—"Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." At the right hand of God He inaugurates an entirely new work, and in connection with this work He provides a fresh and suited instrumentality. The operation of this instrumentality is Christian ministry.

The first part of this service of the Lord is His dealing with men by the word, gaining their attention, and drawing them out of the world to God, through His name; but then, when souls are converted, by much the greater part of Christian work remains to be done. They are quickened indeed, but only brought within the threshold of divine blessing. It is not that one doubts or slights the reality of this blessing. God forbid that we should disparage the new birth! They have Christ as their life; but how much they have to learn of Him whom they now possess! Hence the main work of Christian ministry in the church is to lead those converted into a deepening practical acquaintance with Christ and delight in Him and His glory, into the application of the truth (found only in its fulness in Him), to all the difficulties as well as to

all duties and the energetic purposes of His love, while we are passing through this world. Hence the need of various forms for the due fulfilment of Christian ministry; as we see in the passage read.

The apostle begins with prophecy. It is indeed the highest character of instruction from God. It is not necessarily predictive. Prophets do predict, but this is not what constitutes prophecy. On the other hand, it is a great mistake to suppose that prophesying is merely edifying men in a general way. Prophesying does edify men in the most important way; but the verse to which I have referred in chap. xiv. of the 1st Corinthians is not a definition of prophesying but a description; that is, it does not tell us what prophesying is, and nothing else; but it describes what prophesying is as compared and contrasted with speaking in a tongue. To speak in a tongue does not edify people, but prophesying does. Yet there are many who might edify without prophesying. He surely edifies who strengthens souls by holding up Christ and making His love better known; and so does he who exhorts or teaches well. But none of these things is prophesying, which means that character of truth which puts the conscience of a man in the presence of God, which gives the soul the certainty that His mind is in that which is uttered, stripping and laying bare thoughts, motives, feelings, everything. Such is prophecy. There may be what approaches it, no doubt, elsewhere; but this is its proper force. In that same chapter (1 Cor. xiv.) we see the proof. Going into a Christian assembly, where they were talking with tongues, a stranger might think they were mad. What a reproof to the Corinthians! In

very childish spirit they were reasoning after some such human way as this: "If God has given us tongues, we ought to use them: but there is no place so important as the Christian assembly; therefore tongues should be used in the Christian assembly." One thought of Christ, one right feeling about the church, would have preserved them from that mistake. How did the talking with tongues promote the glory of the Lord Christ in the assembly? How did it edify those that came together in the name of the Lord? Not in the smallest degree: consequently, had there been singleness of eye in thinking of Christ and those that were Christ's, they never would have thought of it. They went astray owing to the commonest source of error: they were thinking of themselves and of their own importance. Having the gift of tongues, they thought they were to use them because they wished it. Who could forbid them? Did not the gift come from God? Thus, we see, it was independence of action, not perhaps without human arguments as to their duty, but without the express word of God, or even that instinctive sense of truth which requires a certain spirituality to apply aright. They were walking like men, and even children; they were carnal, not spiritual; they were reasoning instead of believing. All was wrong.

This led the apostle to suppose another case. Let a person come to the assembly, and hear them, not talking in a tongue that nobody could understand, but prophesying; and what a different result! Then all the secrets of the heart would be revealed, and the effect upon the unlearned person, or even the un-

believer, would be, that he would fall down on his face and feel that God was in them of a truth. In this case his conscience would have met God through the word thus brought to bear on him.

We must remember that in those days the Christians were surrounded by the heathen and the Jew; the one brought up in the follies of many gods and many lords, even below the consciences of man, instead of above them; the other accustomed to the driest and coldest possible moralizing on the law and the prophets. What a change it was for them to see the true God brought into contact with the heart of man and his conscience! The effect was immense on them, more particularly on the poor Gentile. Accordingly such an one fairly broke down prostrate before the living and true God who thus dealt with the secrets of his heart. But this shows us the true nature of prophesying. It was not predicting something that would have to be waited for, to see whether it would come to pass: this is not the prophesying the apostle means. Prophesying applies to the future in peculiar circumstances. Not that one looks for such a character of it now: I do not believe that a person predicting things now would be in the order of the action of the Holy Spirit, for the simple reason, that the predictions of importance for God and for man are already given in the written word. But there remains the other sense of it,—namely, the bringing out the truth of God so as to deal with man's conscience, and give him the full conviction that it is God who is speaking to him by man. I see no reason to doubt that God still vouchsafes this—in feeble measure perhaps, and in rare

cases; but still, that the principle of it is true I cannot doubt, and that it will not fail as long as God has work and testimony on the earth.

But next we find what is called here "ministry;" and by ministry I apprehend is meant serving the saints—kindly, loving, self-denying interest in their difficulties, snares, sorrows, wants, and trials. It is not preaching nor teaching, but helping the saints otherwise. This is set down as a real gift. Do you not feel and know that there are those who teach admirably, to whom you would not think of going if in any strait? I am sure there are not a few who can preach and teach too, yet do not possess that kind of spiritual power needed to advise in case of any trouble or difficulty. It is part of the fallen state of the church to concentrate all in one; as on the other hand there is no disrespect if one simply own each according to what is given from above. Scripture alone gives the certain truth, and sanctions the right man for the right place.

Is it asked how the reality of these gifts can be known? May there not be mistakes through vanity on the side of some claiming beyond their measure, or through the pride of those who disown and thwart what eclipses their self-importance? I answer that all that is good in divine things is by the Holy Spirit, by whom God decides for us these difficulties. Undoubtedly prejudices may hinder for a time; but those who know God can trust Him to make known how He would have us serve the Lord, or to whom we should look for loving succour in things too hard for us. Power of the Spirit in any way proves itself; especially where souls are habituated to test all by the word of God, as the

Christian and church always should. Were there no such person as the Holy Ghost in the Christian and in the assembly, the difficulty would be insuperable; and the objection has weight in exact proportion to the objector's unbelief in the real presence and gracious guidance of the Spirit, alas! the characteristic sin of Christendom. But the Spirit is here to care for the saints of God, to draw them out in worship and to direct them in service. Does He fail in this? Never where faith is at work. That unbelief cannot see how these things can be, is but natural. It is His function to glorify the Lord in all, but especially as regards public testimony by those to whom He has given special gifts for the general good.

Gift, then, of whatever kind it may be, is not an official status, nor a name by courtesy, but a real power which Christ gives by the Spirit, and which is made good in practice, as conscience guided by the written word will own; and this is just as true in "the ministry." or service of the saints, as in prophesying or any thing else. The chief difference is, that "ministry" in this sense may not be a public gift at all, whereas prophesying in the case of man is, of course. Those engaged in preaching and teaching may also have this gift of "ministry." I am persuaded some have it in a very eminent manner; but it is well always to give the fullest breadth to gift, and to give the utmost value to what one does not possess oneself. Grace delights in honouring others. And, be assured, this the Lord would have us cultivate somewhat more. It is always happy when those who themselves preach or teach are earnest in maintaining the place and value of those

who do not, and when those who have other gifts, such as serving or ruling, stand up for those who teach or preach. "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body."

It is in this way that God works for welding all together by His Spirit. His is no system of classes, each jealous of another. All that was found abundantly in heathenism, if not in Judaism; but it is not so in Christianity. There are "gifts differing," and each servant of Christ should maintain those of others, trusting the Lord as to his own; for there can be no course less worthy than for a Christian minister to be contending for himself under the plea of Christ's honour. For sometimes excellent men fail in this, through a mistaken notion of not allowing the Lord's gift to be despised.

This is all well; but am I the right one to see to it in my own case? or should I strive to stir up others on my behalf?

It is clear that there is always plenty of evil going on; but as a rule, true wisdom, if you are ill-used, is quietly to bow, and, if you must, to fight the Lord's battles, confiding in Him to espouse your cause, but in no case to fight your own battles. You may have

done so; perhaps we have all done so; but have we not learnt, if so, that the route is cheerless, and that not thus can we gain the victory that shines to the praise of Jesus in His day? Your defence provokes aggression, and, as long as you defend yourself, you will have, not one only, but many, who will for this reason suspect and oppose you.

Such is human nature, and the children of God are not free from its effects. The path of faith gives deliverance from these difficulties, though it has its own, in which the Lord shows the sufficiency of His grace. Therefore leave these matters with Him. Our business is to fight His battles, not our own—to look at the things of others, which are really of Jesus Christ, and not our own.

Hence we return to the great theme now before us. "Having, then, gifts differing" does not mean valuing our own gifts, or of those who accept particular views on given points of an external character—the surest sign of a party spirit. In the church of God, in order to faith's full blessing, the Lord gives gifts various in measure, and differing in kind and aim. Hence the plain duty of all the saints, and more particularly of His servants, is to take care that there is nothing on their part, and nothing sanctioned by the saints in this or that servant, that would hinder the free and full operation of whatever the Lord has given for the church's good; for if He gives, it is ours to receive, and, as we value His love and authority, to receive all in their place, as He has set each in the assembly. This is the ground of ministry, and the true principle on which depends its due working to His glory.

But every reflecting Christian will observe how this clears the way immensely. The church of God is neither the source nor the channel of ministry. Without speaking of the monstrous sin of accepting the world's interference, or accrediting a mere sect, which of course, like the world, can only give an authority within its own circumscribed limits (for sects, like nations, are mutually jealous, and only recognise each other by courtesy), the right of the Lord—the free action of His service in grace throughout the entire assembly of God—is ignored by both, and as impossible to be heeded in sects as in the world.

But supposing you look now at the brightest and fairest scene that God ever made on this earth—namely, His own church, the body of Christ—it is most certain that ministry never did find its source or authorization in the church, but from the Lord Jesus acting by the Spirit; and this can be readily proved by the word of God. It is a truth indeed of capital importance, yet little seen and less acted on, but indispensable to every saint, and above all to every one who serves the Lord in the word.

First of all, then, it is clear, according to the scripture already referred to (Eph. iv.), that ministerial gift is attributed to Christ as the Giver. If it be said that Christ is away, I answer, that this was true when Christian ministry began. There is no essential change in this; for although, before proper Christianity was seen among men, the Lord had chosen apostles and others, like the seventy messengers sent throughout Israel, we must remember that they had an exclusively Jewish mission before He (Christ) went to

heaven. They were Messianic envoys, who testified of the kingdom only, not of redemption by His blood, still less of Christian standing or the assembly of God; and their testimony was armed with peculiar powers, revoked before He suffered (Luke xxii. 36).

But my subject to-night is not Jewish but Christian ministry, which followed on Jesus taking His place on high, as Lord of all and Head of the church. Ascended on high, He gave gifts unto men. Those first named are no doubt the most important: He gave some apostles. So great is the change, that previous appointment is quite passed by; even the apostles are set on new and heavenly ground. But He gave some prophets also, either distinct from apostles as here, or associated with them in the foundation of the new building, when the same term was met with. Then we hear of some He gave as evangelists; that is, individuals specially fitted to spread the glad tidings to every creature. Lastly, He gave some pastors and teachers; that is, such servants of His as were qualified privately as well as publicly to enforce the truth of God, both doctrinal and practical, on His children. The object of all this was "for the perfecting of the saints," with a new ministerial work, with a view to edifying the body of Christ. Thus the proper effect, and the shape taken, are clearly laid down.

This then is plain, and at the same time of weighty consequence; because we have certainty from the word of God as to the Giver, and the most important kinds of ministry; but, besides that, as to its aim and object. May we not add too, from the context, the implied perpetuity of Christian ministry, peculiarly expressed

so as not to clash with the constant expectancy of Christ, but enough to comfort faith; for if Christ has given in each case "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," it cannot be suspended—still less terminate and fail—till the whole end is accomplished. Assuredly the Lord dies no more. He died once, and for us, blessed be His name; but this was before He ascended and became Head of the church. He is living at the right hand of God, and, as the unfailing Source of supply, He gives these gifts.

This again is another exceedingly important consideration. To faith it supplies the answer, whatever the questions that arise. Let us conceive the present company to be a true, however faint, representative of the church on earth; and the question to be started by any, How ministry is to be appointed in our midst, and how what is real is to be distinguished from pretension.

Must we not look to the Lord, and search His word? To form our own thoughts and theories is natural, but human, and the way of sure error. Does the Lord leave us without instruction? Certainly not. He who gives the gift (which, when exercised, constitutes Christian ministry), secretly deals with the souls of the saints whom He would build up with His grace and truth, and of the servant who is in a given way stirred up and strengthened of the Holy Ghost to go forth in the work, whatever it may be, to which he is called. How often and how various the exercises and conflicts between heart and conscience; love for the Lord and for souls; fear of one's own nature and perhaps of others!

I remember myself, for instance, a person in whom the beginning of his work in the ministry of the word among the saints was of this sort. Found just in such a company as is here this night, he had strongly enough the word of God laid on his spirit. He was timid; he did not wish to speak; he dreaded a mistake about the Lord's will in rising, but he did not like to risk the appearance of forwardness. Was there not pride in this? He really shrank from what people might say, and consequently kept back. There is sometimes as much of self in cleaving to one's seat, as in too great eagerness to leave it. There may be flesh in both ways—the vanity of coming forward, and the pride that shrinks from being thought vain. Both are wrong. Were there more simple occupation with the Lord, and hearty exercise of love in seeking the good of souls, most of these difficulties would disappear. However he had not the faith to go forward. The meeting proceeded. The very scripture so heavily pressing on his heart was read by another. Then he felt constrained to rise, and ventured to speak out boldly the word of God, who was pleased to carry home the message to the hearts and consciences of the children of God then present. This was used to teach him to confide in the Lord, and with quietness and simplicity to go on in the face of difficulty, opposition, detraction, hindrance—everything which the enemy excites wherever there is a gift from Christ exercised in dependence on Him; for assuredly he will never leave undisturbed those who are really raised up of God. He may not harass thus where natural or worldly plans reign, but he knows how to sift, thwart, and trouble where Christ is

sought to be served. Thus the fact of such opposition and difficulties ought rather to reassure and cast on the Lord where there is faith to look to Him and His word.

But it may be asked, "May not believers be mistaken?" Certainly; but where simply gathered to the name of the Lord, and instructed in the word of God, it is rather a critical experiment for an individual to get up and minister. Vanity and pride may be found everywhere, and are always evil; but assuredly of all places it is hardest to speak where the word of God is really weighed and intelligently applied. He who has not something from God is pretty sure to be found out there; and, if there is Christian plain dealing in love, he is sure to be discouraged. Not that it is right or gracious to be hard on any man in such circumstances. Indeed it always strikes one as deplorable to hear of the readiness of some to bear hard on the comparatively young and the ardent, still more on older men who have been under less favourable conditions for knowledge and free service. It seems to me an altogether mistaken line of criticism to be sharp on worthy labourers who could know little, and at the same time to be timid enough in presence of mistakes in those who ought to know more and better. Where persons have somewhat of experience, they might be expected to have patience; and where thoroughly grounded in the scripture, they can afford to hear all the difficulties and bear that which would be severe and crushing to young men. It is beneath the dignity of those matured in the mind of God, to be oversensitive with such as are apt to have their stumbling-blocks, prejudices, and objections. Bear in mind as to

this the language of the great apostle. The first sign of an apostle Paul puts forward is "in all patience." If that was a goodly index of one extraordinarily sent by Christ, I am sure for other reasons it ought to be the accompaniment of a true minister everywhere. The more you have the consciousness of the Lord putting you forward, and being with you in the work, no matter what may be the form of your ministry, the more be encouraged to bear with the froward, to compassionate the ignorant, to help all that need it. The more you are assured of the truth and of the Spirit's power, the more you can put up with that which would be otherwise trying. This is plain, that, if not simple in faith and strong in the Lord, you will in the same ratio be touchy, which is anything but a badge of Christ's service. It is well to bear this in mind, for things are sadly changed in this as elsewhere. The church of God is not a place for avoiding difficulties, or displaying what we know and would make known. Ministry in the church, whatever is of God, whatever is holy, true, and good, must be fully tried, so as to put men to the proof. To faith this is just one of the privileges which the Lord turns to His own glory and the very great blessing of those who cleave to His name.

But this at once shows us that the idea of being what is called "educated for the ministry," or taking it up because one happens to be a fluent speaker, is vain. I do not mean to say that as a question of ability this may not have its value in its own sphere. It is admitted that, if ability is not forgotten by our Lord, His gift is required in order to real ministry. So true is this, that we may easily see, not only men in the world, but

Christians in the church, possessed of considerable ability but having no gift whatever in the word. You may all have known such, as I have; persons of admirable knowledge of scripture but without spiritual power to enforce or explain the word of God in a proper manner to others; if they attempted it, they would fall into confusion and make mistakes, or at best the word would be powerless for good. Even if what they said were pellucid as water and free from error, there would be no power in it,—nothing to bring Christ before the heart, or to exercise the conscience before God. It is evident that such speaking is not ministry. It may be a pleasing discourse, but not Christ applied to souls. Ministry means far more than a Christian speaking truly on scripture; it is the exercise of a positive gift from Christ; and what He gives has for its effect, either to bring souls to God out of the world, when they pass from death unto life, or to nourish and direct the life which is already given.

This leads also to another thing. It may be asked, Do we not find in the church of God, according to the account scripture gives of it, that there was a certain form or method of initiation—a public induction of gifted men—into the ministry? There are certainly many men of godly feeling who think much of what is called "ordination," appeal confidently to Scripture for it, and think it is a very serious wrong or defect where it seems slighted or at least absent. Many where they least expect it can appreciate their difficulty. Some of us here can remember the time when we had equally strong prejudices on this head. Confessedly it is a duty to examine scripture thoroughly, and to cleave to it at

all cost. It is allowed also that the word of God is quite plain about it.

First of all, as to preaching the gospel, none can dispute that, when persecution broke up the church in Jerusalem, all good Christian men went about evangelizing the world (Acts viii.). This ought to settle the question as to principle. It is not only that they scattered and went everywhere, but that scripture proves they were sanctioned and blessed—that the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. It is in vain to allege in the face of Acts xi. 19–21 that the action then was irregular and owing to peculiar circumstances. It might have been hoped that those who plead for antiquity and order would show more respect for that which had the sanction of the primitive church, of one not behind the chief of the apostles, yea of God. For let it be remembered that all this was in the earliest days of holy order, if ever there were such, and of power in the Spirit, if ever this was known in man here below. These were days when truth was proclaimed by holy apostles and prophets; what can be more harsh than to imply a departure from due order sanctioned of the Lord at such a time? The truth is, that the objection is human, and that the collision of scriptural precedent is with an order set up, not by apostles, but by the fathers in the dark days of declension which too soon set in, when through the craft of the enemy another sort of order undermined that of the Holy Spirit, when pretentious form was substituted for power, when Ignatius, and Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria supplanted the apostles, and

utter departure from the grace and truth of Christ ensued far and wide.

But it is only fair to weigh those scriptures which are commonly quoted against freedom of preaching and teaching, always bearing in mind that the question is exclusively one, not of spiritual competency, but of liberty to minister among those assumed to be competent.

One of the passages chiefly insisted on is the beginning of Acts xiii. There it is alleged that even Saul of Tarsus, the apostle of the Gentiles, himself submitted to the rite of ordination. He and Barnabas, it is said, were then ordained at Antioch. Were there any real ground for this, the case would be closed. But the passage disproves that for which men produce it. There was no ordination whatever. Look at it well: the truth has nothing to fear. If it were the revealed will of the Lord for every preacher or teacher to be ordained, the right course would be clear; for one must expect His gracious wisdom would make due provision for giving effect to His will among those who fear and love His name and word. Were the common practice of Christendom sound, it is certainly an easy matter anywhere to get ordained. It nowhere requires learning, and a little piety suffices the very few bodies which require it. Few trades or professions need so short an apprenticeship, so little ability, such slender acquirements; and the mass of clergy, from Rome to Geneva, from Canterbury to the Primitive Methodist Conference, consist of men springing from a comparatively humble position in life. Ordination therefore, if scripturally requisite for all preachers and teachers, is by no means of difficult attainment in itself or in its conditions. The natural heart

likes it; for it prevails among Catholics and Protestants; and Mormons or Moravians as rigidly insist on it as Papists or Presbyterians. Quakers make much of their elders, and Congregationalists of their ministers. In short, search Christendom through, and all have in some shape their ordination, and hence their clergy, of which they think no small things. The question is —Is it of God? How far Acts xiii. sanctions it, we shall see when the account is examined.

"Now there were at Antioch in the church that was [there] prophets and teachers; both * Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Is this what men think to be ordination? What are the facts, as compared with the inspired history? Barnabas had been ministering in the word for years before this. So had Saul of Tarsus, as we learn from his own account in Gal. i. Compare Acts ix. 20–29. Afterwards for a year together Barnabas and Saul were gathered together in the church at this same city of Antioch, where they taught much people. Thus, not only Barnabas, but he who was an apostle by the call of the Lord Jesus, preached freely among Gentiles as well as Jews, and taught particularly in that assembly

* The best authorities omit τινες "certain"; and there is no authority whatever for the insertion of "as" in the Authorised Version. Thus the vague impression is removed, that there were other teachers there unnamed. There were really three besides Barnabas and Saul.

and city where, a considerable time after, we are told (but not by God) that they received orders at the hands of their ecclesiastical inferiors. Is this even reasonable?

But this leads us to another point of importance. We have Paul's own inspired answer to the argument. He distinctly pronounces upon the question; for from the first there were not wanting those that found fault with him because he had not been appointed by men,—that is, ordained. As to the twelve apostles, every one knew that the Lord Jesus had either formally or virtually appointed them (formally as to the eleven, virtually as to the twelfth); but there were men of that day who shook their heads as to Saul of Tarsus. Of course he said he was an apostle by divine call, and spoke of the wonderful vision that he had seen outside Damascus; yet nobody saw it but himself, they sagely remarked, and who then could be absolutely sure? Very mysterious man, this Saul, who had suddenly leaped from a persecutor to be an apostle. His teaching too was strikingly different from every one's else, even the other apostles'. Thus doubters appeared among the early Christians, who were stumbled at his immediate call, irrespective of those before him; and these men were difficult to convince about the matter. Hence in an inspired epistle, and this the most solemn in its form that he ever wrote, Paul told the Galatians that he was an apostle not of men neither by man. He denied that humanity was either its source or its channel. This statement destroys the argument from top to bottom. Ordination, in the common popular sense, must mean that the channel, if not the source, of the ministry in question is human. The apostle for

himself denies it as to both. He insists in precise terms, that he was an apostle "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." That is, when God stopped him on the road to Damascus, when the Lord Jesus appeared and told him then that he was a chosen vessel, he was appointed or constituted His apostle from that day. This is what he lets us know, and exactly what he acted on. In the same epistle he says, "When it pleased him who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." What did he do then? Go up to Jerusalem to get his orders from the apostles? Not at all. "Immediately," says he, "I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem."

But was it then to be ordained? No; but to visit Cephas, with whom he stayed fifteen days. "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." And so strongly does he feel on this head that he adds, "now, the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." He was conscious that for him and others too, the truth he preached was bound up with his ministry; and as the truth he taught was the development of what the grace of God gives, not only in the death and resurrection, but characteristically the exaltation of Christ in heaven, so his ministry had a heavenly source, not earthly, still less human. Expressly to harmonize with the divine

counsels as to Christ and the church, the ministry of the apostle Paul knew no human channel, and not even as its source Christ Himself on earth—for this also it is of importance to affirm. There are many pious souls who acknowledge God as the source of ministry; but then, as they say, for the sake of order man must be its channel. The apostle takes pains to deny the latter no less firmly than the former.

Further this is not to be regarded as an unfruitful exceptional circumstance. It intimates a principle thenceforward to be seen at work in the service of the ascended Christ the Lord. It is vain to say that it does not concern others; for he was an apostle, and had a miraculous vision. And why then did you venture to argue on his alleged ordination (Acts xiii.)? If you take the ground of treating the apostle Paul as furnishing no instruction for ministry now, why do you throw dust into people's eyes by the insinuation that there was real ordination in his entrance on ministry. The truth is, that you are as wrong in your alleged facts as in denying their bearing on our practice. Saul and Barnabas had been preaching to those without, and they had also been instructing those within, before this pretended ordination, the fact and principle of which is excluded by Galatians i. 1., as far as Paul is concerned, in every shape, degree, or aim. Has the erroneous use, has the truth, no voice for us all?

Do you ask, "Why then were Barnabas and Saul separated?" It was of the Spirit who was now distinctly sending them on an unprecedented errand among the Gentiles, though regularly even then "to the Jew first." In this it was important to have the

sympathy and prayers of their fellow-labourers. Supposing some one here were marked out in some way adequate, as God knows how to make it to our consciences, to an untrodden field surrounded by peculiar difficulties, such as Tartary or the interior of China, with the danger of ever-present death for the truth's sake, —would it not be a becoming thing, in those circumstances, that those who had faith in God and fellowship with the work should get together, and with prayer and fasting lay their hands on the head of him that was going out, not pretending to make him anything that he was not before, but rather identifying themselves with this errand of love? The known and ancient sign of identification was the laying on of hands. It was so in the case of sacrifices; so too in conferring a blessing on a child, or a gift on one designated for it like Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6), in praying for a sick person, or in appointing any to a charge like the seven curators of the poor in Acts vi., where the task was exclusively external, though some had also a spiritual gift in the word. It was always on the part of some one presumed to be connected with the source of the blessing, who by that outward sign indicated his desire that God would impart it to him who was its object.

Observe that elders are never said to have had hands laid on them, though it is probable from 1 Tim. v. 22, and from general use, that imposition of hands may have accompanied the choice of them by apostles and apostolic delegates. But scripture seems purposely silent, as if to warn against making a form of it, *there* at any rate it can claim no sure inspired warrant.

The case of Acts xiii., then, could not be one of ordi-

nation; for what is the meaning of this rite? In the generally understood sense among godly men (for I do not speak of vulgar superstition among Romanists or the like) it is this: the Christian may have the power from God (or the gift) for a certain work of a ministerial sort; but he has not thereby title to act, till those who have the authority from the church ordain him, investing him with a proper ministerial character according to the prescribed degree or position he is to occupy. There are differences; but this is the broad notion, divested of abuses and irregularities which abound here as elsewhere.

What a strange disorder, yea, inversion of things, to interpret the scripture so as to involve the conclusion that Paul and Barnabas, two apostles, got their orders from Christians, who were not only not apostles, but in gift, position, and every other respect, inferior to themselves! Is it thus they would prove a valid ordination? Who will pretend to say that, if ordination was meant, any could be thus chosen in a legitimate manner? Even in the world superior officers of government are never appointed by the inferior, unless in a republic. Government ordinarily and properly descends from the higher authority to the lower. Such is the picture according to the word of God; and it always will be so unless where and as the spirit of revolution upsets it. But such is the order most certainly in divine things. Accordingly, wherever in scripture the question of ordination comes up, a subordinate office is conferred by functionaries of higher grade. Where were such here? The advocates of ordination are in danger of repeating the error of Paul's adversaries, in denying his full apostolic authority,

through deriving it from men, and men of subordinate place. Scripture assigns to Paul an apostleship of the highest character and immediately from the Lord.

Thus it is manifest that the attempt to found ordination on Acts xiii. is not only a total failure in every point of view, but strikes a blow at his underived apostleship and his testimony of the truth, as well as at the veracity of God's word. Those who imposed hands on Barnabas and Saul never had their important place; and in fact, before this act they themselves had been teaching the church in Antioch as well as preaching to those without. Evidently they had held the highest place among those that were then labouring there.

My conviction then cannot but be, that the imposition of their fellow-labourers' hands in this case was a most orderly act of interest and of prayerful communion; it was in no wise a pretension to confer an authority which they did not possess. But, if this case fails, there is no other as regards Paul; for it is remarkable that, when first brought to the Lord, it was so ordered that a simple brother laid his hands on him, and then the Holy Ghost was given to him. He who baptized the apostle was not an apostle: else it would have been said that it was one in that high position who gave Paul his authority. As it is, nobody can pretend that Ananias conferred anything of the sort on Paul.

How wise are the ways of God! I remember well reading some years ago a book by a living dignitary of the Anglican establishment, in which he speaks of the absurdity of men in office claiming to be the sole persons to baptize. This he argued from this very case of

Ananias, as well as from Cornelius, etc. He pointed out that it was a layman, as people would call it now-a-days, an unofficial disciple, who was used purposely to baptize and lay hands on the greatest apostle the Lord ever gave to the church. It seems to have been just the same principle on the day of Pentecost; for, although Peter and the rest of the apostles no doubt baptized many, it may be doubted whether only they baptized three thousand in a day. So, when Peter went down to Cæsarea (Acts x.), instead of his baptizing as if it were his sole prerogative, "he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." The other brethren—the unofficial brethren that accompanied him—must have baptized on that grave occasion.

Surely, if anything could destroy the notion of baptism having its validity from the authority of the apostle, such a fact is calculated to do so. What clergyman would think of doing this? Peter, then, was not, and could not have been, a clergyman. Suppose one looked, for instance, at an official in any particular religious system, is it conceivable that such a one would delegate his power or authority to these unknown Christian brethren? Especially, would he act thus on a most novel and critical occasion, without such a plea of numbers or necessity of circumstances as might be said of Pentecost? Has anybody ever heard of such a thing since the clergy began? It is not so that men do now. Their thoughts and habits are altogether changed from the truth of God in this matter. Far be it from me to say that the apostles Paul and Peter would have thought lightly of one preaching the word out of his own head, or out of unworthy motives —envy, strife, or covetousness. This would be a gross

evil, but not unknown of old (Phil. i.). But the clerical principle in no case remedies its worst forms, but rather sanctions by legitimating them. Again, ministry does not mean that Christians have a right to preach or teach; for in truth no man has such a right: the Lord has the right to call and send, as He alone gives the needful gift. It is in this that the true principle is wholly opposed to what men call democratic. For democracy means that all rights flow from man's will. Christianity denies this, root and branch; it affirms that the right is the Lord's entirely, and that He exercises His right by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Hence the choice is for God's glory; and one way in which this is secured, is that, by choosing not many wise or learned or mighty or noble, God puts honour on the Crucified One, not on mere circumstances, as position or possession, family-birth, genius, ability, or acquirements. Rather does the Lord in the face of obstacles exercise His sovereign will, so that He gathers, so to speak, out of every sort. To the spiritual mind which delights in honouring the Second man and not the first, what can be more delightful? In such a state as the present such a choice is precisely the best and wisest possible. What more deplorable than if He chose only from some particular class? No, such is not the way of the Lord. Inasmuch as the church chiefly consists of the lowly, so is it with the greater part of those that minister. Thanks be to God, none is excluded from His grace or the service of Christ for natural circumstances. Thanks be to God, none is to be supposed fit for the Lord's service because he is learned, or noble, or rich, or anything else

in this world. Let us cast off all unworthy prejudices or prepossessions. We must be simply governed by the word of God and the evident will of our Lord Jesus.

The essential principle of ministry is, then, that, as the power is of the Holy Ghost (only just suited, in form to the ability of the man who is called, but distinct from it), so on the other hand it is entirely in the Lord's hand. Therefore the assumption of the church to choose and authorize ministers, or to order their action, is a plain direct infringement of God's word and of Christ's authority. It is no question of any particular body; for I am sorry to think that wherever one looks—from the Pope of Rome down to the humblest pastor—this principle has found footing. A minister is regarded as an official of the system or denomination. There is no such thing in Christendom as a servant of Christ left free to do His will. And the reason is obvious: it would not help on the interests of the sect. He must be a priest of the Romish church, a clergyman of this body, a minister of that, and so on.

My brethren, if you are guided solely by the word and Spirit of God, you cannot fail to see that Christ alone calls and makes one *His* servant. Why should Christ's servant be a servant of man in divine things? Be content to serve Christ alone; you cannot serve two masters, as Christ has warned you. To serve Him only gives singleness of purpose and becoming dignity. This alone puts you in the place of dependence; this produces and sustains the only true and lawful independence. This I hold to be essential to the glory of Christ and our own allegiance to Him. There should assuredly be the freest scope given to that ministry. In the

history and epistles of scripture, never does even an apostle step between the least servant of Christ and his Master.

The evident feeling there is that, as it would be unbecoming for the little gifts to interfere with the greater ones, so it would be still less worthy for the greater ones to absorb or extinguish the less. There is no right sense of Christ's authority, no adequate value for His service, where any of these things are allowed to intrude and hinder. Yet such is the actual state. The apostles were hardly gone before this crop of evil showed itself; for, indeed, the germs were there before.

Take for instance Corinthians iii., already referred to: "I am of Paul, I am of Cephas." There were those who thought that Paul was immeasurably above every one else, as others had a jealousy of all but Peter; others again were swallowed up in Apollos. But what of some who set themselves against the rest, on the plea that we must beware of exalting man, and said "I am of Christ"? I have little doubt that these were the worst of all who thus troubled the church with their fleshly preferences. For the corruption of the best is ever worst; none certainly were flying more directly in the face of Him whom they professed to honour. It was a subtle self-assertion, and none the better because under His name. In vain do they pretend to honour the Master who despise those He has called to serve Him in serving them. In such cases the real object of idolatry is poor and paltry self, and in order to this the enemy suggests the name of the Lord as a convenient cover. For it would never succeed to put self forward: people would reject it of course. But it was a specious self-deceived deceiving to say that for their part they thought

it better to be taught of God and not man; that, as for these ministers, it was well to beware, for it was evident that they all more or less set aside the congregation of the Lord, not giving sufficient place to their brethren and not owning the lordship of Christ. They counted it therefore more spiritual to look away from them all to Christ exclusively. Such thoughts, brethren, though they may look fair to some, are in my judgment based on the hollowest and falsest principle possible to conceive among Christians. For the express way in which the Lord Jesus is now glorified is by His Spirit here below; and the Spirit works by the different members of Christ's body to the profit of all. So true is this that I believe it would be a calamity for the church if it had only the ministry of the apostle Paul; and none would have resented this evil narrowness more than the ostensible object of such spurious homage.

Suppose it were possible to have the ministry of Paul, I do not hesitate to say that the church, if it shut itself from all but Paul, would be robbed of no small part of its food and other necessary supplies. Even the great apostle was not the most suited means of conveying all that grace had to communicate. The ministry of the least gift that Christ confers on the church is as necessary in its place as the ministry of the greatest. I maintain, therefore, that it is just as the arms of the body have a place more imposing than the toes, yet you cannot do well without the lower and lesser members for all that. They too have their place; and if they are wrung or pinched, the whole body suffers not a little. The smallest member, if it gets out of joint or into a bad condition, as we know, may cause excruci-

ating agony to the whole body. So undoubtedly it is with the spiritual body. It is this apostle who gives us the same analogy. The Lord has appointed these things for His own glory, and He is jealous over His own order. There is not much fear as a general rule that the more showy gifts will be despised; for a powerful ministry in the word will ordinarily have admirers, even though to a great extent it be not understood. On the other hand, wherever the Spirit of Christ works in power, there will be no jealousy of lesser lights, but anxious care that they may not be superseded or despised. What can be more happy than when we see men of greater power leaving room for the less; or, again, the least of these walking humbly, and giving the fullest place to those to whom grace has given more than to themselves?

Thus manifestly the church of God, and the ministry of Christ, are expressly intended to be a place not merely for the communication of gifts, but for the exercise of grace and patience, of the mind and the affections of Christ. Nothing keeps but the eye fixed upon His glory. This is God's aim by the Spirit.

Christian ministry is not a means of living for men, however right it may be that the servant should live by the gospel if he have no adequate resources in God's providence. It is a comely thing that those who minister in spiritual things should not only not want for carnal things, but that fruits of loving care and honour should abound even if there be not absolute need; for one could scarce devise a greater humiliation and loss for the church than to be in circumstances where apparently their affections could not be drawn

out. Suppose an assembly where none were needy and only rich men addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints and of the gospel! It were far better for the assembly if the rich moved off, or at least took care not to stifle the activity of love in their poorer brethren. It is a calamity when rich men patronize and saints sink into clients,—a twofold snare, and a permanent dishonour to the Lord. Let the rich seek objects outside the place they live in, that the poorest brother may not be hindered from knowing the acceptance of his mite, and the value of his quota in all that concerns Christ. It is of prime moment that the heart of all, even to the destitute widow or child, be drawn out in active, gracious, intelligent interest and sympathy as to the church or the gospel. Wherever patronage intrudes and is allowed, there will surely be "death in the pot," and, in the end, disappointment to the patrons, if not the danger of covetousness to the dependents, who will be apt to feel that there is no good reason why they should practise generous self-denial; for wealthier men supply more than is wanted, and why then should the poor contribute? Thus are they taught to count themselves and their offerings of comparatively no moment, whereas grace and wisdom would carefully instil the contrary.

Do not imagine that this is a fanciful picture. I am persuaded that not a little of the kind has too often injured those called "brethren" in some quarters. Occasionally there has been a disposition on the part of men of large means to be lavishly ready and forward in settling everything. They ought to beware and leave room for others—yea, for all. They need not fear for

love. The assembly is one, and many places might well and wisely receive a share of what in their own locality would be almost unalloyed evil. Whatever gives undue importance to wealth is as evil as the slighting of the least member of Christ. Ministry according to the world manages these things, according to Christ it corrects and directs them to His praise.

It is good that those who have the means should use all as faithful stewards, but never so as to stifle love or dignity in the lowliest saint of God. Let us not forget the poor but blessed widow with her two mites. Instead of telling her that it would be more prudent for her to keep the two mites, the rich may learn how poor are their gifts in comparison, and seek to have their hearts drawn out as hers was in devotedness and faith God-ward.

Thus ministry is a large theme, and serves to connect the homeliest matters with the glory of Christ, which casts its bright light over all the details, and alone secures its truest honour.

Christian ministry is spoiled if made a question of present distinction in the world and filthy lucre. And do not let us think of danger for other people only; let us beware for ourselves. There are none exposed to greater perils than those who are brought outside the camp to Christ, bearing His reproach. Not that one has the smallest doubt of the right path for the faithful in the present ruinous state of the church. Scripture leaves no hesitation as to this for those who have confidence in it by the Spirit. At the same time it is a path where a careless foot may trip, where none is exempt from the constant danger of being dragged

to one side or another. The path of Christ needs the hand of Christ to keep one steady in it. The only guiding star is Himself, seen on high, and soon about to come for us. Shut your eyes to that which attracts nature, and unflinchingly carry out what you know to be the revealed will of the Lord. Do not join parties or allow party feeling. There is not a little of this sort which we have to guard against.

Exercised according to the word of God, ministry is an invaluable means of helping souls and keeping things straight. But the true principle, it must be repeated, is this: whatever gift Christ gives, He has given for use. If it be asked on this,—What is to become of gifted women; for surely some of them have such power in the Spirit? I answer that undoubtedly they have gifts, and ought to use them too. It is not intended for a woman, more than a man, to put the light under the bushel. The Lord holds us responsible to profit by and use His gifts. Only we must remember that the woman, not being a man, is to act as becomes a Christian woman. We must not forget that it is no question of privileges in Christ, where there is no difference, but of public action in His name, where we must have His warrant. Now there is a propriety in this, and very strongly is this insisted on, and by true-hearted intelligent souls recognised as in the Bible. Never there do we hear of a woman preaching the gospel. In the East, for women to go forth publicly to proclaim the glad tidings in the crowd would seem utterly wanting in decorum. In the West, men do not require such severe seclusion in females; yet is there a wide gap between the happy liberty they enjoy and the

forgetfulness that they belong to a sex whose best place is the home circle, or that which approximates to it in visiting the sick and poor, the young and old.

It appears to me then, that the thought of women going forward in public to preach the gospel is unknown to scripture, often as we find women employed in delicate, difficult, and extraordinary errands. Not, of course, that women might not freely declare the glad tidings to needy souls, for they clearly ought to tell of Christ diligently, and far and wide; but there are bounds prescribed, and a seemliness which may not be sacrificed. For no otherwise speaks the word of God. Never do we hear of a Christian female preaching to the world.

The question might be raised as to the Christian assembly. Surely, as some think, they may be allowed to speak in the church or congregation of holy men and women, where lawless ways are intolerable, and the Spirit acts freely for Christ's glory. But no, says scripture; this is the very place where they are commanded to be silent. As to the world the question is not even raised; as to the church the question is ruled in the negative by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture does not in the smallest degree supersede the value of woman's service, as well as her seeking the good of souls individually. We know (Acts xxi.) that the four daughters of Philip prophesied. These pious women had the highest character of gift for ministry in the word. Where did they prophesy? Certainly not in the assembly. They probably prophesied in their father's house, which seems a fitting and the fittest place for them. In this case we must remember the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians xi. 3–16. For

1 Corinthians xiv. 34, 35; 1 Timothy ii. 11, 12, are conclusive as to that which has been affirmed; and, undoubtedly, the more you search, so much the more you will find in scripture that every truth falls into its proper place. No one duty destroys another; the word of God is in perfect harmony with itself when really understood. Our haste sometimes, flesh's will always, sets one passage in opposition to another. But the believer does not make haste, and, desiring to do the will of God, knows the truth through grace.

Having but touched upon these important topics, I must not omit to say a word on elders, as it might be thought that the subject was passed by designedly, or at least with negligence. There is not the smallest reason for evading it, inasmuch as the light of scripture enables one to furnish a clear, distinct statement on what is generally misunderstood.

In Christendom elders are habitually confounded with ministers of the word; even Presbyterians, who ought at least to be right in this, make the same mistake here as their neighbours. Hence an elder is never included in any scriptural list of gifts (Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv.; 1 Pet. iv.). They had a grave and responsible post, but they might never preach. Their business was to lead or rule, exhort and rebuke (1 Tim. iii. 5, v. 17; Tit. i. 9). An elder must be apt to teach, and might have the gift of a teacher; but his position as an elder was something distinct from, and other than, a gift. Whatever may have been the fact among the Jews, where the beginning of eldership is not unveiled to us, it is certain from the Acts of the Apostles (xiv. 23) and the Pastoral Epistles that

elders were by apostolic authority, personally or by delegate, invested with a local charge or an outward authority of rule within a certain circumscribed sphere (*κατ' ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ πόλιν*).

In some of the churches of old, as, for instance, Ephesus and Philippi and elsewhere, we hear of elders or bishops, of whom there was always a plurality in the same assembly. They were different names for the same persons and the same thing. The notion of elders or presbyters and bishops being different is mere ignorance or prejudice, if the authority that decides be God's word *in* apostolic times, not tradition *since*. In scripture they are always of the same extent, the same functionary and same function, only with a different name from a different point of view. Hence the comparison of Acts xx. 17 with verse 28 proves not merely, as dishonest controversialists say, that bishops are presbyters, but that presbyters and bishops are identical, which is a widely different statement. I doubt that any Christian teacher who is entitled to be heard on this subject, no matter who or where he may be, if he be only possessed of competent knowledge, would venture to impugn what I am saying on this decisive passage of scripture. It used to be contested by divines of the last and former centuries; but although one may not think much of progress in the nineteenth century, I am glad to say that hardly any one would dispute this now; and I am speaking now even of scholars attached to episcopacy. It is all but universally acknowledged that the elders and bishops of scripture were not two classes, but the selfsame persons and office.

It has been already remarked that they were appointed or chosen by due authority. Persons might ask, "Have you then elders or bishops now?" I answer, No. This however is from no indisposition to receive those whom God raises up, but because none can have elders or bishops without apostolic authority in person or by delegate to appoint them. Hence, if we have not duly chosen elders, *you* have them not one whit more than we. The difference is, that you pretend to what you have not, while we confess the truth.

Nobody at this time has scripturally authenticated elders, not having true apostles to appoint them. You cannot have them because you want the requisite authority for appointing them according to God's word. There are many religious societies which have them in name; but whether it is a gain to have them thus irregularly, without the authority needful to validate them scripturally, judge for yourselves.

We are all familiar with the fact that they have plenty of elders in Scotland, of Established, Free, and I know not how many other sorts. We are at home, too, with the fact that in England they claim to have them, disguised, it is true, under other names; and this not in the national Establishment only, but in the various associations of Nonconformists and even in the Society of Friends. So, too, it is abroad, far off or nearer home.

At the same time I am bold to say that in Scotland as in England, or in any other country, they may be styled presbyters as much as men please, but they are no more presbyters scripturally appointed than the other members of their flock. It is easy enough to call

a person a presbyter; but it is another thing to recognise them as such according to the word of God. But it is into this we are now inquiring:—What is the truth of eldership according to scripture? not the value of the name when only given by man in a way altogether different from that only rule of divine authority.

There the essential condition of duly constituting one a presbyter or bishop is, that, *besides* having the necessary qualifications (personal, relative, and circumstantial), he was chosen as such by an apostle or an apostolic delegate, like Timothy or Titus. Thus chosen, they were put in that position in the assembly before they exercised their office. This probably was what induced people to imagine the idea of apostolic succession, and to invent it by a fiction, since God provided none. They saw that apostles were necessary to appoint elders or bishops. But scripture gives no warrant for expecting the continuance of divinely-given apostles. Hence they fell upon the theory of succession, yielding to the assumed necessity for a constant appointment of elders. But they have no scripture. The men who are loudest in their cry of order are really therefore convicted of the gravest disorder and presumption.

The fabric of holy orders is built on the sand. They cannot truly defend it by the word of God. In scripture there is no authority for what they are doing, nor anything like it. It is, therefore, however well meant, as mistaken and really rebellious an assumption as appointing magistrates without the seal of the realm.

Such is the fatal net in which most Christian bodies have involved themselves. How much better to do

what scripture warrants, using our gifts in the church of God or without elsewhere going a hair's breadth beyond what it directs or allows us to do?

The Presbyterians, it is true, do not pretend to apostolic succession; they do not claim to have apostles or their delegates; but they fall into at least as great an evil on the other side; for they share between the people and the presbytery that choice and authority which scripture attributes to apostles or their duly commissioned delegates. Will they dare to say, with the New Testament before their eyes, that an ordinary minister was competent to exercise a function which we see there committed only to Paul or Barnabas, to Timothy or Titus?

It is evident that Timothy had a charge over elders or bishops, and that ordinary ministers at Crete could not do what Titus was authorized to do. Presbyterianism and Congregationalism dislocate and deny this beautiful order of scripture, and, by a gross error, let the congregations choose the elders!

But in the word of God there is no such thought as a congregation choosing elders, and then another man or other men appointing them. Such confusion was unknown where God arranged. Would that all were content to bow to revealed facts and truths, and to learn the wisdom of His ways!

Before the apostles closed their career, the declension of the church was palpable, and its ruin irretrievably at hand, if not come. God would not then provide the highest authority to sanction what was slipping more and more from Himself, or to keep up external local order in presence of such growing unfaithfulness overspreading the church as a whole.

In modern times, when Protestant efforts for truth, honest but unintelligent, added to the ecclesiastical chaos, one can understand how wise was the seeming oversight, but really intentional omission, to provide the means of providing elders, any more than apostles, legitimately; as otherwise they must have legitimated the existing confusions of Christendom, which would be as far as possible from the mind of God.

Is it thought that God does not provide amply for the guidance and blessing of His people in the worst of times? There could be no greater mistake. His grace abounds in the richest way, but not so as to annul His moral testimony to His own word against man's corruption and self-will. He gives all that is for His own glory, and our blessing, spite of all the church's sin. For—mark it well—to be a ruler, leader, or chief (προϊστάμενος or ἡγούμενος) is quite distinct from being an elder. Thus, in Acts xv. 22, 23, Jude, Barsabas, and Silas we see distinguished from the elders, but yet recognised by all as chief (ἡγουμένους) men among the brethren; and so it is elsewhere. These two were even said to be prophets (ver. 32).

Undoubtedly the elders ruled, but many servants of Christ ruled who were not elders, and some of them in spheres incomparably larger than that of an elder. Weigh the very passage (Rom. xii.) which has been read, where ruling is maintained without the least reference to elders.

"He that ruleth, [let him do it] with diligence." Is it argued that an elder may be meant though not named? I answer that no apostle had ever been in Rome up to that time, nor any one delegated to do apostolic work in that great city; consequently there

was no one to appoint elders. Hence the force of the passage. There were gifts of Christ, and among them some necessarily not as yet, if ever, chosen elders; and yet they were rulers. Such a recognition as this has been a comforting word to many a heart, and often a great assurance to servants of Christ in the present perplexity of the church. There are, and will always be, rulers raised up of God, as long as the good of saints calls for them; although the condition of the church is such that they have not and cannot have the official status of elders, because God has not seen fit to perpetuate the needed ordaining authority. I would ask any grave Christian which of the two, in his conscientious judgment, is the best—a real ruler, or a sham elder? This seems exactly the point to which matters come on this head—to be a ruler according to the gift of Christ, or an elder according to a spurious apostolic succession, or the equally unauthorized choice of a congregation, with or without a make-weight ceremony of men who have not the slightest authority from the word of God for it.

But observe another ominous and patent fact. So glaringly is the present state of things in collision with the word of God that there is now sprung up a new kind of official never heard of in apostolic days—the individual called "the minister." Who ever heard of him in scripture?

There is no such person or office there as that which is commonly known as "*the* minister." Not to speak of elders, we hear of rulers, preachers, teachers, pastors, ministers in the word, and other ways too, according to what we have been endeavouring to ascertain; and I doubt not that your consciences have gone along

with me, led by the word of God. There were gifts differing, and consequently ministers differing in the same church. There might be many; as in the church at Antioch we heard of Simeon, Manaen, Lucius, Barnabas, and Saul,—various labourers having different gifts, and harmoniously using them. Such is the right principle. It requires no little grace among the companions in labour. This can be dispensed with when a man has the place all to himself; which saves from much difficulty, no doubt, but it sacrifices the will of the Lord. What can be more miserable for those who love His name? Who can deny it? The one-man system is clean contrary to scripture. Is this a light matter? It is to those who deny its Divine and permanent authority. Say not that this is a secondary or unpractical question. A bad conscience can plead this because it fears the truth which condemns the course it chooses to follow. Are you prepared to hold to scripture, or will you yield to unbelief and go on in disobedience, because you have been hitherto unfaithful? Why not look to God for grace to follow as He leads from day to day? Why not begin with humbling yourselves for your blind zeal in so long defending human tradition and fighting against the word of God? Are you indifferent to the fact that you have been systematically slighting what so nearly concerns the Lord's glory? Most of us have known the sorrow; many of us have learnt better through grace. We know what it was to have been merely following the track of our fathers, or at best what we ourselves were attracted to when converted, before making it a distinct question for prayer and the word of God. Certainly it is a great mercy to think of our parents, as well as our

own souls, brought to the Lord; but the Divine object in all mercies, past and present, is that we may be strengthened to do the will of the Lord now, and henceforth grow in it with increasing fervour and simplicity.

I pray you then, hold fast to the truth of God's word. Search the scriptures, and fear not to obey. The things which puzzle most when not understood illustrate His grace and wisdom when once seen. Thus, when the church was evidently breaking up into parties, and there was to be no longer the one manifested assembly of God on earth, the apostles disappeared. After this the mass fell into ever-swelling corruptions through the admission of Jewish and heathen principles, and sects and parties split off, and at length Popery, etc., and Protestantism with its manifold denominations. In such a state the officials would be only those of a denomination, instead of being bishops set in the flock by the Holy Spirit. The Lord accordingly withdrew the means of imparting a true scriptural charge, when the condition of the church falsified His testimony. So far from finding fault, then, with that which looks anomalous in making it impossible to impart His stamp on that which is spurious, I bless God for the fact that an order which is only human has not the smallest just claim, whatever its pretension, to have God's sanction. From the non-descript minister of a sect, from elders who lack the sole authority which scripture acknowledges, you are driven to reality. It becomes more and more a stand-up fight between infidelity and superstition on one hand, on the other the word of God and the Holy Ghost. Which, then, is your choice? Infidelity is abandoning scripture as fast as it can; superstition is

perverting scripture to maintain the way that it loves; and both will be found united against the written word. The reality is finding its true place in conflict with them both, not without the joy of the Lord and His known will. May we cleave to God and to the word of His grace! Manifold difficulties may be experienced; but He knows how to solve them for us by the Spirit's use of His word.

The subject of ministry is vast and has various points of view, with many details not touched on to-night. I have evaded none; at the same time to enumerate all at once would be impossible. My desire has been, trusting in the Lord's guidance, to say what I could on it at this time with simplicity and earnestness, with the clearest proof from His word as to His will, on which depends your duty, for they are correlative. May it be yours, then, first to learn what His will is, and then to cleave to it; and this in a spirit of grace and humility, as becomes such as we are, especially in a day of evil and confusion! Is it not true, that many of us have found the truth too much for our measure of practical grace? Have we not been sometimes lifted up, as well as harsh, too ready to find fault with others and to correct mistakes in those who could hardly be expected to receive it, where, therefore, if there had been more grace on our part, we should have allowed many things to pass? For why force good so as to do evil by an unseemly way? On every ground, and more urgently, as things are, should we see to it, brethren, that, holding fast the truth uncompromisingly, we may walk in love and lowliness. The Lord make us more simple and devoted to His own name and glory!

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome and London.

THE

COMING HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON MAY 3RD, 1869.

WILLIAM KELLY.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 28, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1869.

Price Sixpence.

THE

COMING HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON MAY 3RD, 1869.

WILLIAM KELLY.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 28, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1869.

THE COMING HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

REV. iii. 10.

THAT there is a time of trouble, a special season of tribulation for the world, revealed in several important and plain passages of the word of God, no thoughtful Christian can for a moment question. All may not be clear as to those whose lot will be cast in those days, but that such a season is to befal the world is not to be doubted. That it is also to be a day through which some of God's own people are to pass is equally certain. We shall now enquire what it is that God's word affirms as to both those who shall be there, and those who shall be in the grace of God exempted from it.

At the same time a wider question arises than the hour of tribulation. We must not confound scriptures that differ, even if the difference be comparatively slight in appearance. "The hour of temptation" does not appear to me to be exactly the same as that of the great tribulation. Temptation may take the form of severe affliction, but it is not limited to such a type of things. Temptation may assume the character of seduction, as well as of trial in the shape of tribulation. I shall show to-night that there is a well-defined period as to which scripture leaves no just ground of hesitation;

that there are preliminary judgments on one side, and on the other snares of all kinds, as well as a storm of trouble that will fall on those who have slighted the grace of God, and cast away His truth. I shall show further that it is by no means true that none of His people are to be exempted from that "hour of temptation." The verse that I have read proves the contrary. We have the Holy Ghost here addressing to this effect the assembly of God in Philadelphia—the Christian assembly there. More strictly speaking, the angel of the church is before us,—who was, it seems, a kind of ideal representative of the assembly,—and the promise runs in the most distinct terms: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

It is evident that the import of this is not merely that the faithful are to be preserved. I shall prove that for others preservation is assured; but there is a special exemption promised here. We can all conceive how, supposing the fearful time of trial came, some might go, however secured, through that hour, and others might be kept out of it altogether. The question is, whether the scripture is clear that both of these methods are to be made good—that some are to be exempted from the hour of trial that is coming upon the habitable world, but that others are to be kept not out of it but through it. I have not a doubt that these two schemes are true, and that God's word explicitly teaches both.

Further, the analogy of the dealings of God in past times leads to the same conclusion. If we look back to the earliest times, when God dealt with the world as

a whole, undoubtedly He kept for His own name's sake some through that flood that swept the world away before it; but was that all? Was there merely a Noah and his family preserved in the ark? We all know the contrary. We know of one at least that walked with God before the flood came, and was not insensible to what was coming. He knew it as well or better than Noah; and whereas he walked in communion with the Lord before the season of judgment came, he was taken without seeing death. Enoch was translated from the earth, and taken to be with God above. Thus we have the circumstances of a great divine intervention —a time most striking and unexampled in the previous history of the world. When God was visiting the sons of men, and this with displeasure, for there was manifestly a tremendous judgment coming on the earth, God wrought in a twofold way. He removed one who looked to Himself and walked with Himself before the flood came; He brought others through the flood of waters that they might be a nucleus of blessing for the fresh conditions of the earth that were to follow the deluge.

We find again, if we look farther down the history of God's people, one similarly taken in special grace out of the world. In the course of the Jewish nation Elijah was caught up to heaven, while his successor, Elisha, was left to testify on the earth. Thus we have clearly God giving more than once a premonition of His will and of His ways in both respects. Therefore, in setting before those who are here to-night, as distinctly as God enables me, a sketch of what awaits the world, at least as to this short season of signal trial, we are not left without signs and tokens of what the Lord has

done: this we may do well to compare with that which the Lord is going to do both in exemption and in preservation.

Nevertheless, be it observed that I do not rest the proof on types. Nothing but direct scripture ought to be the foundation for any man's faith; and I shall cite enough to demonstrate that the word of God is as precise and positive as possible. I shall show that no other meaning is so satisfactory; that it is the simple unforced sense of the word of God. At the same time I shall be exceedingly obliged to any child of God who doubts it if he will only favour me with what he conceives to be a more satisfactory exposition of any one of the scriptures we may refer to. Need it be said that we ought to be above any question of our own opinion in these matters? They are too serious; they too closely affect the glory of God and the well-being of God's people. Let me add, beloved friends, another thing, that my aim is not at all to excite or entertain any one's mind, but to furnish from the Bible for the Christian's faith what is of very great importance. Clearly if this is what is before God, if He means to remove some of His people from the earth, if He means also to have a people for His name to go through the time of temptation as well troublous as seductive that precedes the day of Jehovah, it evidently must be of the utmost possible interest and moment to know whether we can on Scriptural grounds look confidently to the precious blessing of being with Christ Himself when the fearful hour of retributive infliction shall come upon the world.

Whether we open the Old Testament or the New,

however we take the passages to be cited, we shall not fail to gather instruction. But to show how little depends upon anything artificial, I shall at this time take the texts simply in the order in which they stand in our common English Bible. The Christian has no interest—we ought surely to have none—but the glory of God. No doubt by putting together particular passages in an artful way it is very possible to impose on the ignorant, whether by a show of strength or by a concealment of weakness. I am giving the best conceivable evidence that such a suspicion need enter no man's mind in this case.

The first passage then that occurs to me as bearing directly on the subject before us is found in Jeremiah xxx. There we read of a day of trouble, a time of sore distress, and we are told who are concerned in it. The seventh verse is express: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." There can be no doubt as to the force of the passage. This is a time of trouble, of special sorrow, and the one who is said to be involved in it is Jacob—a well known designation of the Jewish people. They are thus called in their weakness, and trial, and suffering, and bitter experience of their own faults, but at the same time objects of God's faithful care; not looked at as Israel a prince with God and men, but Jacob, as learning not a little of themselves. Accordingly we may see how appropriately the term is used here. This time of trouble will come upon the Jews because of their unfaithfulness. God does not willingly afflict the children of men—never His people, but for higher and more

blessed objects. Thus we find trouble referred to in these two ways—the loving discipline of a Father who seeks our better blessing, and along with that, in the Christian's case, as we know, the privilege of suffering for righteousness' sake, or, still more, suffering for Christ's sake. But such is not the character of this time of trouble. No scripture intimates it. It is never presented as being an honour: it is a time of judicial sorrow and affliction.

Again, the party here shown to suffer in that time of peculiar trouble is clearly a Jewish one—Jacob. At present I shall not, of course, enter into a detailed proof of the impropriety of applying the terms "Jacob," &c. to the body of Christ, the church. Perhaps it may be assumed that most persons in this room have no question on this head at least. They know perfectly well that Jacob or Israel, in the Old Testament as well as the New, means the Jews. They know that the Christian church is otherwise characterized, and that the greatest care is taken to keep the new thing distinct from the old, and to mark the distinction. There are principles in common no doubt. There is a great deal of the truth of God in the Old Testament which applies with equal and sometimes with even increasing force to the Christian. No one need question this. For instance, holiness, obedience, submission to the will of God, delight in His ways, suffering for righteousness' sake,—all these terms we get in the Old Testament, and they are found even more emphatically true in the case of the Christian and the church. Therefore none can fairly suppose that I weaken the exceeding value of the ancient oracles. If I am addressing my servant, it is

quite right that my child should profit by what is said to the other. Again, supposing a wise father might give instruction to a child, it is all well for any other person to profit by it. But then we must not confound the relationships. In the Old Testament clearly the Jewish people are primarily the object of God's direct dealings. In the New Testament the great object, after the Jews had rejected their Messiah, is to bring out the church of God as a new building, characterized after another sort altogether, nevertheless surely bound to profit by all the ways of God, especially with Israel.

Without further notice I assume, therefore, as a thing beside the present mark, and not needing discussion just now, that where the Jews, Israel, Jacob, Zion, Jerusalem, &c., are referred to, these words really do refer to them, not to Christians. If so, the bearing of the word in Jeremiah xxx. is plain enough. The Jews are expressly supposed to be exposed to some exceeding trouble, but with this comfort, that they are to be "saved out of it." They are not to sink utterly in this time of trouble. Here then we have at least an analogy with one of the parties described at the beginning of this discourse. We have not persons kept from going into the time of trouble, but people that are brought through it. In short, we have the Jews saved out of their most dismal day.

If we turn to the prophecy of Daniel, we find, in the last chapter and first verse, an even stronger statement of the same fact: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same

time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." By this of course the meaning of the passage in Jeremiah is strongly confirmed. There is the same time described, but in yet more emphatic terms. The trouble is to be not only "great," but none before so great, and never any to be so great again. It is manifest and certain that there can be only one such time. This is important. There is an hour to come beyond all that has passed upon the earth, and no subsequent hour can equal it. It is this very time of which Jeremiah was speaking; for we find, first, Daniel's people; then, involved in that dreadful hour; and, yet more, delivered out of it. These are precisely the three points in the passage already extracted from the elder prophet. Thus Daniel and Jeremiah do not merely confirm each other mutually, but add exceedingly to the force and clearness of the truth in question. Nothing can be plainer than this conclusion. It is true that the Jews who are brought out of this hour of trouble are supposed to be persons of whom God has a record. They have a real living relationship with Him. That is to say, it is implied that the mass of the Jews will not be brought out of that hour; but as all then alive are to pass through it, so all will be delivered from it who are "found written in the book."

And this is the more interesting because it is from this same chapter that our Lord Jesus quotes in the discourse recorded in Matthew xxiv., as well as in Mark xiii. In Matthew xxiv. 15 we read thus: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy

place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,)" &c. Now this is a citation from the latter part of Daniel xii. It is evidently implied that many who read it might not understand; at least our Lord particularly cautions those who read to see that they enter into His thought. "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Never does He discourage from reading; but He would have understanding. His prescient eye foresaw the confusion that would pass over the minds of men, even of His own disciples. He knew well how much earthly objects of one kind and another obscure the spiritual vision. He knew well that there would be all sorts of notions afloat, more particularly about prophecy; so that many children of God mistake, and many more dread, the subject. They feel that there is gross confusion, too much of conjecture, and very little positive truth to build up the soul thereby, and thus they allow their minds often to be prejudiced. Instead of judging the thoughts of men and their systems, they turn aside from that precious word of God which certainly deserves better treatment. Surely it is to their own great loss; and it will be so increasingly; for as darkness sets in, and as all kinds of evil are brought up to the surface of the world, more and more as time goes on, the children of God will need to take heed to every word, and indeed especially to the word which casts divine light on the future.

In fact a man can no more avoid looking forward mentally than he can forbear ordinarily to look forward with his eye. It is the nature of man to do so. He ought to look up; but he certainly looks forward. But if you do not subject your mind to God's word, you will be sure to fill it with your own thoughts, or those of other

people. That is, you must either be a student of divine prophecy, or you will be in danger of setting up to be more or less of a prophet yourself. Depend on it that to study believingly, earnestly, humbly, self-distrustingly, the word of God about the future, is exactly the way to keep oneself from being a prophet, and, let me also say, from being a false one. Nobody will turn out a false prophet who is content to be only a student of prophecy.

The word of God then, where Christ, not self, governs, is the truest preservative from all error. I admit there prevails great and strange misuse of scripture. I entreat my brethren, whoever they may be, to watch against this with all earnestness. There is no need of hurrying to a conclusion. It is better to acknowledge our own ignorance; it is much better to wait on God and His word, and meanwhile to confess we do not know this or that. Why should there be haste to form a fully and clearly-defined sketch of what is coming? Be content rather to get truth in a detached way; to let this matter that God reveals in His word fall into your soul, and then another matter, as He gives it. Almost all the mischief is done by forming, or attempting to form, a complete theory when we are but learning the elements. It is far wiser to take the revealed facts of the word of God, and gradually to link them together as we become matured. This is the right way with all truth. It is no otherwise even in science. It is the most serious hindrance to progress when men form a hasty hypothesis, instead of first collecting all the facts; that is to say, they thus foreclose the case, and take the

place of being masters when they may be but scantily-taught disciples.

In the things of God, indeed, it is true and certain that there is One pre-eminently capable of teaching, even the Holy Ghost; and we may be perfectly sure that He takes the deepest interest in this; for He was given to show us not merely the things of Christ, but "things to come." Let us then thankfully and humbly look up to God, that we may be led into all the truth.

Turning then to the words of our Lord Jesus, and the use that He makes of the prophet Daniel, we have the same elements as in the Old Testament, but with especial light and fulness. He was instructing His disciples, no doubt; but evidently a disciple in his then condition might represent either a godly Jew or a Christian. The reason is plain. The disciples were not on proper Christian ground until the death and resurrection of the Saviour, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Everyone knows this who bows to scripture about the matter. The proof is very evident. Going up to the temple, attending Jewish feasts, keeping rigorously the traditions of the law and the ordinances of it,—no one can say that all this is Christianity in its due form. But it was the condition of the disciples then, and for some time after. Consequently, the disciples were capable of being used, according to the intention of Christ, to represent those who would be raised up in a day that was coming, substantially similar in point of circumstances to themselves; that is, men converted but still connected with Jerusalem, the land, and the hopes of Israel. Such was their condition at this very time, and therefore they were

even more fitting representatives of such a state than they could be of Christianity proper. At the same time the Lord does afterwards give prophetic anticipations of what would belong to Christians, properly so called. It is entirely a question of the manner in which He was pleased to speak, and the subject of which He treats, which enables us to form a sound judgment in which relation the disciples are viewed.

Let us apply these principles to what we have here before us. What originated the discourse? The admiration expressed by some of the disciples at the beautiful stones of that splendid and wonderful fabric which was then the special adornment of Jerusalem. But the Lord told them that every stone should be thrown down, not one be left upon another. Is this Christianity? It was Christ predicting the downfall of Jerusalem and the overthrow of their temple. Does this overthrow any of our hopes? It has nothing to do with our place and relationships. It had a vast deal to do with Jewish feeling and thought and expectation.

The Lord accordingly gives first various general warnings which dealt with them as they then were. In the 15th verse He comes to something much more precise. He launches out into the circumstances that surround the end of the age, and says, addressing them naturally as representatives of those faithful Jews who should be in those days—"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Who can be so bold (to say the least) as to affirm that this is a picture of the church

at large? Do you suppose that Christians would ever be contemplated in the land of Judea alone? Clearly not. All is plain if He is speaking about Jews—godly ones no doubt, but Jews in that particular land. It is not at all a prophetic declaration as to the saints of God in different parts of the world. It is here nothing but a view of what would be in a future day in that land alone. We all understand that the mission of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations is to be from that land as from a centre; but in verses 15, 16, &c., He speaks exclusively of those in that land. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Their flight was to be so immediate, that if a man was on the housetop, he was not to come down through the house; and if he was out, he was not to come back for what might seem ever so necessary.

I know there are many persons of old and to this day who apply this to the past siege of Jerusalem. But the proper prophecy of the past destruction of Jerusalem is a part of Luke xxi., not Matthew xxiv. There our Lord speaks about Jerusalem as encompassed with armies; but there is no such sign as the setting up of the abomination of desolation, no such rapid flight called for; and, in point of fact, every one who knows history at all must know that there was neither one nor other as in Matthew, but exactly as Luke says in the past siege of Jerusalem. The Roman lieutenant who came and encompassed the city did not at all demand to be at once heeded after this peremptory

sort. There were months that elapsed between the retirement of Cestius Gallus and the arrival of the still greater force under the emperor when the destruction of Jerusalem took place some years afterwards. That is to say, there was plenty of time to get away family, friends, baggage and all. There was no need, therefore, for so urgent a flight. All this is to me decisive, that our Lord did not in the first gospel refer to the past historical siege of the city. There He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place." This, we have seen, is never once referred to in Luke xxi.; but another fact, as follows—"And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." There is not a word here about coming down from the housetop; not a word that forbids the man in the fields from coming back. In short it is a different and more ordinary state of things, characterized as "the days of vengeance," &c., "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people," but not speaking of the tribulation, as Matthew and Mark do, and consequently without the citation from Daniel. The times of the Gentiles clearly run on after the siege in Luke, and as clearly not after the scenes of which Matthew and Mark speak. There is a flight enjoined, but no such instant flight as in Matthew. There is an analogy, and nothing more, between the past siege and the future of Jerusalem; but the past event, as Luke reports, admitted of a

retreat from the city far more quietly, and with greater ease for their escape to Pella, &c. The future siege will demand a peremptory flight from Jerusalem, according to the word of God given by Matthew, who consequently (not Luke) speaks of the *end* of the age.

Coming back, then, to the earlier gospel, the Lord says, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." We see that it is not a question of the world at large. The winter would not affect all the earth at the same time; what is winter in one place is summer in another. It is not a universal picture. Again, there is "the sabbath day." Everyone here, it is to be hoped, knows that such is not the name of the Lord's day. We as Christians very properly keep not the seventh day, but the first. A man who does not know thus much has a great deal to learn, it seems to me. Christians deny, and very rightly, that there would be any sin, in case of death, or sickness, or any peremptory call, to walk a mile and a half in order to do good to a neighbour, or to seek the blessing of an enemy. I suppose there are many here in this room who would feel perfectly ready to go twenty miles, if they could visit twenty sick persons in the course of a Lord's day. All Christians surely would not censure but value it. What do I infer from this? That the Lord is not speaking here of Christians at all. He contemplates godly Jews who are to be under the sabbatic law, and who would feel themselves in a grievous dilemma, therefore, if they had to flee on that day. He says to such, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter" (when inclemency might hinder), "neither on the sabbath day" (when legally their flight could

not be permitted). Then He gives as the reason for all—"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The conclusion to be formed from these considerations is this, that our Lord was addressing the disciples as representing future godly Jews—"every one that shall be found written in the book," not Jews as such simply, but the godly remnant of the last days, those that shall be delivered out of the final and awful tribulation. He is referring, in short, to the very same period as Jeremiah in his chapter xxx. and as Daniel in his chapter xii. Our Lord makes this to be still more manifest from the fact, that He quotes from this very twelfth chapter of Daniel. If there could be any doubt about it here, we have His discourse again in the corresponding passage of Mark (chapter xiii.), where it is said, "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment." Thus we see Mark does not take up the same ground as Luke, but agrees with Matthew. Remember, there is no discrepancy whatever. No more impudent unbelief can well be, than to set one part of the New Testament against another, or indeed any part of the Bible against another. Such a handling of scripture is not only dishonest, but profound ignorance. There is not in all the Bible one passage that

really contradicts another. Of course there are passages that may seem at variance; but then, as we begin to get a little more light, these diminish in their number; and hence modesty would feel, if there were but fuller light, all the appearances of inconsistency would vanish away. It is just the same thing in the moral world, nor is it otherwise in the natural world. There are everywhere apparent contradictions and exceptions, but a larger knowledge of things brings these under a deeper rule. So it is with the word of God. Greater spiritual wisdom causes these apparent anomalies to disappear. Sometimes they may be in the translation; sometimes they may be in faulty manuscripts of the original; sometimes, and most frequently, they are in our own understanding. But the great lesson learnt throughout is, that the Bible becomes more manifestly the word of God in its every detail. No doubt the more ignorant people are, the more fault they find with the Bible; the wiser they become, the more they rejoice in it, and bless God for it.

This being so, Matthew xxiv. and Mark xiii. will be found to coalesce with the Old Testament texts we have weighed. All these scriptures suppose godly Jews to be involved in this unparalleled time of trouble, and that they are at the same time to be saved out of it. Thus far then the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly confirm each other. Every Christian mind ought to accept this, even if not thus demonstrated; but I trust that what has been alleged may help to prove it in the face of gainsayers.

But this is not all. We come now to the Revelation, where we find a passage or two of a different nature.

First of all is the one with which we began to-night: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." What have we here? Jacob? Daniel's people? Not a trace of them. Every one knows—it cannot be questioned—that the Lord Jesus is here writing a letter by His servant John to the angel of the Christian assembly or church in Philadelphia. Here at once we find ourselves on different ground. Jews are not addressed, nor is it by a Jewish prophet, either before or during the captivity. It is now the Lord Jesus, who has a double relation. He is the Messiah, the hope of Israel, but at the same time the head of the church. I have already shown that in the passages of Matthew and Mark He is instructing His disciples as to Jewish expectations connected with the land of Judea and the temple. It is clear that they had the sabbath-day, and the number of arguments might be largely increased in proof that Jewish disciples in the latter day are referred to, and such only. But now we find none of this. In all the scriptures that concern the Jews, they are supposed to go through this hour of temptation, but at the same time they are to be saved out of it. They go through that hour; they are protected of God; but none the less are they in the temptation, although they survive it, protected by divine power. Here, contrariwise, when the address is to Christians, the word is, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." The Jews were far from keeping this; they had rejected Himself; they despised the word of His patience. But one of the great distinguishing features of the Christian is,

that he suffers with Christ, and, more than this, that he is content to wait, as Christ waits, for the great day. He is not anxious for the glory of the world now; his portion is not here; the Christian is waiting, as becomes the bride, for the exaltation of the Bridegroom over the earth. The bride knows that the Bridegroom is exalted in heaven, and her heart is where her treasure is. Christ is glorified at the right hand of God; and her present joy is to know well that He who is her Bridegroom is coming, and that He will first gather to Himself His bride, and that in due time He will display His bride with Himself in glory. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." It is not merely that He shall take us away to be hidden in glory. He is hid in God now, and we shall be shortly. But when Christ appears in glory, those who are waiting, and are content to wait, keeping the word of His patience, will be displayed in the very same glory as the Lord Jesus. Such is the Christian's expectation. Christ is to come for us, and when Christ is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.

Entirely falling in with this sketch of the difference between what a Jew expected and what we are now expecting, the Lord directs His servant to write thus to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." Christ is patiently waiting to come; He looks onward to the future as much in heaven as He did when He was on the earth. He has not left His manhood behind because He has risen from the grave; on the contrary, the resurrection is that which binds indissolubly His manhood with His

person. He took manhood in His incarnation, but He has manhood bound up for ever with His own eternal glory. As He retains manhood now in the glorified state, what a pledge this is of our blessedness with Christ when He comes again! We wait for that moment; and because we keep the word of His patience He says, "I also will keep thee," not from the tribulation only, but "from the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Mark, He does not say, "I will keep thee from a certain place of trouble," or from a given sphere where the tribulation is to fall. We can understand that a man might be taken out of a particular locality under judgment. For instance, supposing Europe, or the Roman Empire, or the Holy Land, to be peculiarly the spot on which the tribulation is to fall, we can easily understand how persons outside the doomed limits would not suffer temptation in the same way. This has been a favourite theory; and I have heard of devotees who have gone east and west in order to get out of the scene of dreaded trial. But this is folly, and a total mistake as to the word of God. What the Lord Jesus says is not, "You are to go from the sphere," but "I will keep thee from the hour." Nay, it is a far greater promise, and infinitely more precise, than saying, "I will keep thee from the place of the temptation," &c. Those who keep the word of His patience are not to be there when the hour comes; that is to say, it is a complete removal (not only from the circle but) from the time of the trouble. The church of God will be exempt; the faithful will be kept from it. By the faithful I mean all the children of God.

I beseech all that are here to guard against certain and self-complacent notions opposed to this, and too widely spread in America, and sometimes nearer home. They will have it that such exemption is a reward for believing in pre-millenarian views, and that those Christians who are not so instructed are to pass through the future hour of trouble,—some going so far as to teach that they will be in torture for 1000 years. I beseech you, brethren, treat these notions as they deserve; treat them as bad and base, as altogether opposed to revelation, and the greatest dishonour both to the person of Jesus whom they love, and above all to His work, on which their souls rest before God. Oh, is not this idolising knowledge? It would not become us, assuredly, to slight the study of prophetic truth in which we have found, if one may speak about ourselves, not a little profit and enjoyment. But at the same time to suppose that those who may love Christ quite as well as we do, but who do not hold just views on prophetic truth, are to be tortured for it so many years, perhaps a thousand years,—to suppose God will punish His children thus because they have not been pre-millennialists, let such thoughts be utterly condemned and banished!

I admit that the Lord Jesus is said to come for them that look for Him; but why? Because the Spirit of God assumes that all Christians look for Him; and so they do. Some do it, no doubt, more intelligently than others; some, no doubt, do interpose their opinions on the millennium, as well as others on the tribulation. I do not agree with either. I am sure that all such interferences with the constant hope of Christ are wrong; and men suffer loss through it. I believe that those who

assume, contrary to scripture, that there is going to be a great and long reign of good over the earth before Jesus comes are under no small delusion. At the same time, while disapproving of that notion, I consider that the idea of torturing for a thousand years God's children, in order to punish them for not being pre-millennialists, is about as bad a notion as could be entertained by Christian men. I am not now speaking of those whose scheme directly lowers our Saviour by clouding His Deity, or allowing the smallest spot of suspicion to rest upon His humanity or His relation to God, because one ought not to regard such as Christians at all. They cannot be acknowledged as such while anti-Christian. They may turn out Christians, carried away for a time, of course, just as a drunkard, or any other sinner. A person may fall into a desperate sin, and after all the Lord may bring him out of it. Neglect of prayer and of the word of God, tampering with the world, &c., may draw him into any evil, as grace can restore. At the same time, if a man goes on in sin decidedly and deliberately, whatever you may hope and desire, you cannot, and ought not, to call him a Christian. It is the same with false doctrine: only I suppose that false doctrine is yet more evil and dangerous, because more deceptive than anything else; but no one can adequately judge of false doctrine, unless as taught by the Spirit of God.

This then may suffice to show how, so far as the Jews are concerned, the uniform testimony of the Old and the New Testaments is, that they are to go through this time of temptation, but that the godly ones are to be preserved. The word of our Lord Jesus in Rev. iii.

10 is addressed clearly to Christian ears, representing the faithful that should be found waiting for His coming to receive them to Himself, which is the normal position of all Christians. Nor could the Spirit of God contemplate such an anomaly as those who loved Him not so looking for Him. This scripture holds out the blessed prospect of such association with Him as will exempt them from the time of predicted tribulation and the hour of temptation also. If I do not misunderstand the latter phrase, it would seem to take in the preliminary sorrows as well as later seductions and unparalleled final judgments. They do not all come at once. There will be deceits used as well as persecutions before the crash and the frightful crisis come. There is clearly defined in this very book a difference and progress in evil and trouble. This being so, the promise here given serves without constraint to comprehend and cover all, including the time of earlier trouble and deceit no less than the pressure of special affliction.

Accordingly the Lord declares that those that keep the word of His patience will be kept from that hour of temptation which shall come upon all the habitable world. And for what purpose is this hour sent? That others may be tried by it—"to try them that dwell upon the earth." In the epistle to the Philippians the Holy Ghost brands the earthly-minded as being enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose end is destruction." I hope no one will contend that this is said of a Christian, however it may be of those who had once taken that place. That a Christian may venture near the brink of evil, that he may tamper with the unclean thing, that he may be for a while drawn in more or less, is possible;

but it is beyond dispute that the Spirit of God contemplates those who, professing the name of Christ, altogether abuse it; and their end is certainly and literally destruction.

Here first, in the book of Revelation, the apostle John, at the command of our Lord, characterizes a class of persons who should be found just before the hour of temptation, not only setting their minds upon earthly things, but if possible yet farther gone in that evil direction. They are called dwellers upon the earth. They had given up the blessed place of holy separateness as pilgrims and strangers in the world. Such is the uniform description of Christians; nay, in a measure, of the elders who obtained a good report by faith, as the Old Testament shows, although the light then vouchsafed was by no means so full as it is in the New. What intelligent soul would maintain that it was? If the Old Testament gave all the light needed now, where is the value and where the reason of the New? If it was the same thing, why not call it all the Old Testament? why the New Testament at all? The common faith of Christians knows this, if they do not frankly confess it. The one is divinely inspired no less than the other. There is no difference as to this; but there is the striking contrast that Israel's case is the history of a people under the law and government of God on the earth, while the church is a people led by faith out of all worldly connexion to follow in the path of an earth-rejected Saviour glorified in heaven, and to wait for His coming as those who know their portion with Him above. This is the calling of the Christian, properly speaking.

But whenever did God bring in a blessing without the enemy seeking to turn it to a corruption? If there had not been Christianity, there could not be Antichrist. There is invariably with the light of God the shadow of the adversary. Accordingly scripture is most explicit that the falling away must come. The falling away from what? From Christianity, to be sure; and very likely from the divinely-inspired testimony in general—from that of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Nor do I conceive there will be long to wait for this. Time was when the only persons who used to attack the Bible were wicked men—such as Bolingbroke and Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. Now, I am grieved to say, it is fashionable for clergymen—university professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries—to be infidels. God forbid that I should single out invidiously any one individual, or any one denomination, because it is easy to see that it is found in all the nations and tongues by which Christianity is at all professed. Scepticism is confined to no class, and is as rampant in Popery, though perhaps more open in Protestantism. Honest I can call it nowhere. It professes anything, while it believes nothing. The hard thing would be to say where it has not penetrated. Not that all are as boldly bad as Bishop Colenso; not that all are infidel after so cowardly a sort as the Oxford Essayists and Reviewers. But it is plain that the spirit of infidelity reigns in quarters that yesterday, one may say, would have been ashamed and horrified; and one of the most alarming signs is the powerlessness of Christendom in meeting it. I feel often that the answers to infidelity are only less infidel, if always less, than the assaults on the faith. Witness

the address of Dr. Raleigh on religion and science to which the Congregational Union of London have committed themselves. I desire only to use such facts for the warning of those exposed and for humbling ourselves before God, while cleaving to the word of His grace.

The devil is now making people bolder in the highest places, as for a good while in the lowest. You may depend on it that it is mainly in the middle classes is found the chief value for the revealed truth of God at the present moment. The higher classes are largely saturated with infidelity; the lower classes no less so. In modern times it has been seen that God, while never unmindful of the poor, has most used people between the highest and the lowest to stand for the truth, and to reject error. I believe it is so still, and that the extremes of society are those that go most rapidly to ruin. While this is no doubt true, it is patent that the extremes are advancing rapidly to a moral meeting-place, and that the number of those who are thoroughly devoted to Christ, and who have perfect confidence in the truth of all that is written, is by no means large in any land whatsoever. We may be thankful for what the mercy of God has done in our own country, but I am persuaded that the inroads of infidelity become gigantic at this present time, and that the strides it is taking everywhere are as rapid as they are vast.

If this be so, it is a deeply important matter for us to be on our guard, and so much the more as the moment hastens when these things are about to be realised. Remember, I do not venture to say a word as to defining that moment. God may prolong His patience. Man is apt to be hasty in his thoughts. Just as he

procrastinates in his duties, so is he apt to be precipitate in his expectations. It is unwarrantable for any man to predict the day which no one knows, says the Lord. God has kept all this in His own authority. At the same time there are moral intimations; and as none ought to be blind to the signs of the times, so the church of God ought pre-eminently to heed the tokens of what is coming—to read them in the word first, of course, and to seize their living counterpart in what is working round about us. It is not difficult to see that it is the tendency of the present moment to obliterate ancient landmarks—to cast down established distinctions, especially where there is a high or exclusive claim to revealed truth—to put all things divine and human on a common level.

However this may be, here we have the clear promise, held out by the Saviour, of a people that are to be kept from the coming hour of temptation. Observe, it is not merely a question of the place of tribulation. From elsewhere it is clear that the centre of the worst tribulation is to be Jerusalem. So true is this, that even if the godly but escape to the mountains, they are out of the area of that burning fiery furnace then seven times heated. This is certain from our Lord's own words. They may escape in a very short time to a place where the tribulation cannot fall upon them. Therefore it is evident that the unparalleled tribulation for the Jews can only have a very contracted sphere indeed. I shall show presently that there will be a larger sphere also.

But in the message to the church in Philadelphia we have a distinct assurance of exemption, not merely

from the place, but even from the hour; and this not of tribulation only, but of temptation, which takes in, if I mistake not, the preliminary troubles and seductions as well as the tribulation that comes as a scourge for such flagrant apostasy and rebellion. Thus the promise is of the largest character, and at the same time of the utmost precision. It is a positive certainty to those that really wait for Christ. It is not a question of a mere doctrine. If the heart be not toward Him, what more value in seeing the pre-millennial advent than anything else? It is obvious that there are a great many souls who have the doctrine clearly enough, of whom none can say that it does them much good after all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object of the soul, anything else is comparatively powerless; but where Christ is in the heart as one believed in and loved, and hence patiently waited for, then, no doubt, His coming is no less sweet than purifying. Everything is seen to be precious that directs to Him, and the word of God about Him. Where truth is held apart from Him, there will be nothing to soften the spirit,—nothing to maintain liberty, obedience, and a sanctifying object.

I am speaking, of course, not merely of being screened from the judgment, but of the power of salvation and of joy in the Lord now. Plainly this promise is most full, and it is at the same time no less precise as to the exemption of a people from this hour of temptation. Need it be added who these are? They are Christians, and none others. None but Christians were here addressed by our Lord. To them distinctly is the pledge made, that those who keep the word of His patience,

the Lord will keep—not during, nor through, nor in, but—"*from* (or "out of") the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth;" to try such as may have borne the Christian name, baptized persons, but their heart not in heaven, not with Christ; earthly-minded, earthly-dwellers, spite of the true light and the revelation of glory in the face of Christ.

But this is not all. In Revelation vii. we have another word, and here we have, as is well known, "the great tribulation." I am giving the critical reading; for remember, in cleaving firmly to scripture—and I do not see there is anything else worth contending for in this world—it is a duty to ascertain, wherever a various reading exists, what has the weightiest claims to be received as the true: we have no need to shut our eyes to any representative of the mind of God. In short, the purest state of the text must be sought as well as the most faithful version. To perpetuate a traditional blunder is not faith, but mere ignorance or obstinate superstition. Therefore I accept, and exhort all my brethren to accept, every help that God affords for the elucidation of His word. To this end every discovery of an ancient Biblical manuscript, every help toward a more accurate version that can be gathered from the study of the languages in which God wrote His word, is most valuable. I do not say that everybody ought to set up for a judge in these matters.

In fact, very few scholars, or even Christian scholars, have this sort of competency. It is easy enough to suggest changes of scripture, and supposed emendations of text and translations. We have all heard of 20,000

corrections collected by a diligent physician. It might be a wholesome check if any competent person dealt with that magazine of misapprehensions, as Bode did with the errors made by Mill and Bengel through trusting the Latin renderings of the old Oriental versions. What a tiny residue would come out from the subjection of the 20,000 to a really critical ordeal! In general you may dismiss at least nineteen out of every twenty supposed corrections of our authorised Bible. They are merely the crude guesses of tyros, the suggestions of such as may be scholars in profane Greek or Latin, but who possessed little or no familiarity with the Bible.

Again, it is monstrous for persons to sit in judgment on such matters, unless they do so as Christians. I deny that genius or scholarship will enable a man to understand aright either the Hebrew or the Greek scriptures. The best of scholars have made the grossest of mistakes here. Take Dr. Richard Bentley. Did not he and the like commit very painful blunders in scripture? I admit the scholarship of the famous Master of Trinity in his own sphere. He was, no doubt, a man of very unusual power, and of the largest attainments in the remains of Greek and Roman letters; but then, as a rule, no man is at home outside his own business. I do not trust people who speak confidently on what they have not made their own. I value the simplest artisan in his own craft more than the ablest philosopher who prattles about it. No doubt, if a shoemaker were to talk of philosophy, he would not be likely to throw much light on the subject. He might be a genius, undoubtedly, and to this you must

give ample weight; but still, in general, one could not expect that men outside their own proper functions would be the most competent to give an opinion of value on matters foreign to them. On doctrine I hold the opinion of a scholar to weigh about as much as that of a shoemaker. Not only is erudition in itself of no account in spiritual things, but scholarship in one branch does not give competence in another. The Attic nicety, which appreciates Sophocles, may be at fault before the abrupt passes and parentheses of the apostle Paul. But the first of all requisites, even for those familiar with Greek, for understanding the word of God is unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the sole power of comprehending and alone gives qualification to judge of divine things; and He dwells only in those who have faith in Christ. At the same time let none suppose that I exclude the use of every aid that can be brought in really and honestly to enable a Christian to read the word of God as closely as possible approaching its original form. It is, to my mind, a positive duty to welcome and apply every such help, let it come from what quarter it may.

To those who accept this principle there can be no doubt that the true reading here is "They which come out of *the* great tribulation." The omission of the article is wrong in the common text, and must be given in English to represent fairly the sense given by the best authorities. It is not always so; but it is needless to say that there are definite means of judging, and there is no question at all about its necessity here. To those who know these matters this is a ruled point, not without the effort of prejudice in some to resist the con-

clusion, but in vain. "These," said the elder to John, "are they which come out of *the* great tribulation." This is important, because if you read it simply "These are they which came out of great tribulation," many a Christian might say, "You and I have known great tribulation. This is a choice scripture, and it evidently applies to you and me." Alas! how often we are misled from the prime source of all mistakes—that is to say, interpreting the Bible by our own feelings, circumstances, and sphere. This is not the way to understand the word of God. You must look at it in connexion with Christ, and not with self. Such is the only canon that will conduct a man in safety and light and joy right through the Bible by the grace of God; thus only can one be an intelligent disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Quite different is the way in which persons in general are apt to deal with the Bible; that is, they judge from their own things, and not from the things of Jesus Christ. Connect the word as well as facts with the Lord, and what a difference it makes! There may be Christians so unintelligent as to find in the Bible nothing but Christians and their enemies; but the man who reads scripture, looking at Christ, not at himself and his church, will say, "Well, there was once a people of Jehovah before the Christian and the church of God; the Lord had Israel then the object of His care, and they broke down utterly. Then He gave imperial authority to the Gentiles, and they turned it against Him, compelling the Jews, under pain of death, to worship their idols, and give up the true God. And now the Lord Jesus, having come, has been rejected by both; and

having accomplished redemption, has sent out the gospel and set up the church; and what is the result?" We have before us in scripture the revelation of the end of all, and we have the working of these destructive principles in our own day. To leave room for all is of immense importance. It clears the way for understanding these and other scriptures. The fertile source of mistake is the desire to make all bear upon ourselves.

We have seen the Jewish portion; we have heard the promises to Christians; now we must be introduced to a third party. Nor is there the least reason why we should be in the dark about it; for in the latter half of Revelation vii. we read as follows: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of *the* great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

How many believers here and elsewhere I can hear

asking if this be not a picture of the church. Let me assure you that it certainly is not so. With the utmost desire not to contradict any one flatly, we must feel that there are times when it is much better to be plain and short. I must therefore take the liberty of affirming that demonstrably a Gentile multitude is meant, and not the body of Christ, the church. The proofs are clear and decisive. Every intelligent reader of the book, whatever his view of its interpretation in other respects, agrees in this, that "the elders" and the "living creatures," one or other or both, are the symbol of the church in heaven. How then could one of these elders describe this multitude, if all, elders and Gentile multitude, formed part of the same church? How could the party described and the party describing be the same body? Surely they must set forth a quite distinct thing. The elders were seen long before the multitude.

The context too will make their difference still plainer; and this is not an unimportant key to understand scripture. Never take a passage without examining its context. What is its bearing here? A numbered multitude we first hear of from the twelve tribes of Israel. I know the fondness of many for what they call spiritualising; but it is hard to spiritualise each of the twelve tribes of Israel; and the whole of these are brought before us distinctly and separately, as if on purpose to set aside such mysticising; for this is its true name and nature,—not a spiritual but a mystical use of the scriptures. After the Holy Ghost has shown us the 144 thousand sealed out of the twelve tribes, the prophet then sees an innumerable multitude of Gentiles, distinct from both the elders and the four

living creatures. If the elders mean the heavenly redeemed in chapters iv. v., I suppose they must mean the same body till the last chapter in which the symbol occurs (Rev. xix). Wherever they appear, do they not mean the same thing? I here take the lowest ground. Is it not a fair inference that, if a symbol is found in different passages in the same book, it is to be taken in the same sense consistently? That is to say, if the elders are the glorified saints in one passage, they are the same in all passages. How then could this multitude of Gentiles be so any more than the multitude of Israel? In short, therefore, Rev. vii. shows us a numbered company of Israel, and then a countless crowd of Gentiles, separate from each other as well as from the elders, and characterized as coming out of *the* great tribulation. There is not the semblance of truth that these Gentiles are composed of the successive generations of God's people throughout different ages of the world. On the contrary, they are not supposed to be risen but alive; to the prophet's eye a number numberless, gathered out by grace at a particular epoch, when *the* great tribulation comes here below. This, long known to a few scholars, is established now conclusively by the critical researches of all competent to speak, no matter what their bias.

And why should it seem incredible, or even strange, that God should begin to deal with Israel as such again? As to this, there really ought to be no question, if we believe the various scriptures read at the beginning of this discourse. And if God will keep them, why not the Gentiles too? Nay, is it not certain that He means to bless the Gentiles as such? Is it

asked what He purposes to do for the church of God? We have already seen about it. Those that keep the word of Christ's patience are promised to be taken out of the hour of trial, and those whose earthliness covers the Lord with their own shame are the persons on whom the severest judgments are destined to come. "The hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," does not mean simply Jews or Gentiles, but rather such as have professed the name of the Lord falsely. That true members of Christ's body will be left here below is an idea not only without foundation, but contrary to the clearest principles of truth, and to express statements of scripture. The evil servant and the foolish virgins mean not the true but the false.

And let me add too another point of interest. We find in Rev. xii. one scripture more which gives a cause, and an occasion too, for this fearful time. All this needs to be duly taken into account. You are aware, no doubt, that the reason why the things of this world constantly appear to gain the victory over the truth, as far as what is bad triumphs, is the power of Satan, the great personal enemy of the Lord. Scripture affirms that the hour approaches when that power is about to be broken (not merely to faith, as ever since the death and resurrection of Christ, but) publicly in the world. Satan, according to the language of Rev. xii., will be cast out of heaven. From the seventh verse it is thus written, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great

dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Manifestly this is a state of things at which we are not yet arrived. It would be false doctrine and practically serious to say that such is the fact. A plain reason against it is, that Ephesians vi. declares that the conflict in which the Christian is now engaged is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, not with flesh and blood. As Israel had to fight with the Canaanites, so our special conflict is with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Anybody who intelligently reads the Greek Testament will know, and even those who can enquire of those who do will hear it confirmed, that the expression ἐπουρανίοις means not merely "high" but "heavenly" places. No matter where you examine elsewhere, it invariably means "heavenly places;" and, in point of fact, it never does bear the sense of "high" simply, nor do I believe it to be possible. Any man who knows the language will hardly deny that "high places" is a slip or an evasion. I suppose our translators did not know what to make of the passage. They may have supposed that it would sound strange to hear of wicked spirits in "heavenly places," and so they thought to tone it down or to obscure it a little, and so put in "high places." However this may have been, it is far from my wish to fasten any unworthy motives on them. They have erred occasionally, but were, many if not all, excellent men and able scholars, and I believe did their work with fidelity, though with a certain measure of hin-

drance, especially on the part of the king. We know he was superstitious on some points, and would not allow them to alter ecclesiastical terms which notoriously foster much misconception and prejudice. I do not mean to insinuate that James I. had anything to do with the mistake alluded to in Eph. vi., nor does it particularly matter who it was that suggested or kept it up; but the fact is certain, that we are said by the Holy Spirit to battle "with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places," as Israel with blood and flesh (that is, their Canaanite enemies).

It is certain then that Satan has an astonishing facility of wiles to hinder Christians from enjoying their proper heavenly privileges; but we know that, subtle as he is, it will all speedily come to an end; and this is in part what is described in Rev. xii. It cannot come to an end as long as we are committed to the conflicts spoken of in Eph. vi. None but Apocalyptic dreamers could sustain such a thesis for an instant. For, observe, what we read here is, that when that crisis comes there will be "a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Has there ever been any time so striking for God's blessed intervention in the past history of the church that would answer to this? Is it really true that, when Constantine adopted Christianity, salvation came? Surely not. Who is so worldly-minded as to say this? Alas! such things have been said; but, after all, the idea only requires to be viewed in the light of scripture in order to feel that

it is egregious and unfounded. To suppose that the downfall of Satan occurred in the fourth century, or that the coming of salvation was when Christendom began, or any such like scheme, is to draw largely on one's own fancy. Yet sober men, in other respects learned, sensible, and even godly, have put forth such views.

They were right good Protestants withal—a singular fact that Protestants should concede that in the days of many a dark superstition, afterwards embodied in popery, salvation came, and the kingdom of our Lord and the authority of His Christ. But there is no incongruity too astonishing for the minds of men. However this may be, it is added that "The accuser of our brethren is cast down." At this point Satan will have lost the power of calumniating as well as of hindering the people of God. Hence the call to joy—"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is evident that there are dwellers in heaven then—saints who are no longer found here below on the earth—entirely agreeing with what we have remarked elsewhere. But further: "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." It is the time of great trouble; that is, the time of the unparalleled tribulation that has been already before our thoughts. Thus God will have accomplished His purpose of taking away men to be with Christ in heaven, having put away their sin and given them a nature capable of enjoying His own rest. They dwelt there in spirit when they were on earth; they looked to follow Christ to heaven when they were poor

pilgrims here; they waited for Christ longingly, and they are at length to be with Him whom they loved. After this comes the downfall of Satan's power, and the putting forth of his wrath on earth for a short time. Who can pretend that this vast change has taken place? Surely if there had been a most fearful and unexampled raging of Satan here below, one would think that the world ought to know and feel it. It is a strange theory that such an immense change could have taken place without anybody being the wiser for it, and nobody particularly the worse. Be not deceived. The dread reality is yet to come. Accordingly we read of a tremendous persecution, and the rising up of the two beasts described in chapter xiii.

There is no need to enter more into detail on this subject. I have endeavoured to give a simple and unvarnished view of what the scriptures teach us of the hour of temptation as well as of the tribulation. It has been shown, I trust clearly, that the Jews are to be in the innermost circle of the trouble, though the godly are warned of the Lord to escape from it. Thus our Lord's words have the closest connexion with the declaration of the prophet Jeremiah that, though so sorely tried, they are to be delivered; but how is not explained. Daniel mentions the intervention of Michael, but adds no more. Our Lord fully explains. He tells them that, when they see a certain sign, those in Judea must flee: what is that sign? The abomination of desolation. There need be no doubt that this means, according to analogy, a certain idol, the setting up of which in the sanctuary of Jerusalem will be the signal

for the infliction of this unprecedented tribulation. An incident of the tribulation, or, at any rate, another element of trouble to man, and especially to Israel on earth, will be Satan's great wrath for a short time on his dejection from heaven. Antichrist will show himself openly; Satan will work by him, also by the great imperial power of the Roman empire, as he never did before; and God will send men a strong delusion, that they should believe what is false. As men throughout Christendom will be misled deliberately and wilfully to refuse the truth, God will allow evil to rise up beyond all precedent, and will let Satan have his destructive way, such of His people as are in Judea being saved from complete ruin by instant flight according to the word of the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, is to be the centre, not merely of the great tribulation, but of the greatest; as being guilty of abandoning law and gospel with Christ Himself, always resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did, so shall fall there such retribution as never was. But the Gentiles, guilty in their measure, are not to escape the storm; they may not endure the worst of it, but they must taste the bitter fruit of their doings in "the great tribulation" of Rev. vii., whatever may be the grace of God in bringing out of it a countless throng to enjoy His tabernacle over them during the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus.

Thus God will cause a great and numberless crowd of Gentiles to come out of that tribulation as truly as He will save the godly Jews; but observe, not a word is said about the church in either. How are we to account for a silence otherwise so strange if the church

were really there? If God bound Himself to save Jacob; if He is pledged to bring out a multitude of Gentiles, why not a word about the church? Nay, rather, how could He speak of His church then on earth; for you are aware that in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile. One great feature of the church is the blotting out of such distinctions, and the formation of one new man, which is neither. Thus, whereas we were Jews or Gentiles before, we have put all this off; and as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ. We are baptized into one body—the body of Christ—such is the inspired description of the Christian; so that we who receive the Holy Ghost now abandon our Gentilism or our Judaism, as the case may be. Thus the key is given clearly and at once. The elders will have been—at a moment kept silent in the Apocalypse—translated to heaven, and they are seen there before the trouble comes, not only before the fury of the tribulation bursts, but before the preliminary judgments of God on earlier evils, and the efforts of the devil to ensnare the saints by deceit, and draw them into the final apostasy.

As to this it seems to me that the general bearing of the word of God is abundantly plain, without pretending of course to enter into every minute point. We are only learners; and a great joy it is to learn of God and in His own way. May the Lord bless the testimony of His truth, and give every Christian to have not the least anxiety, but to cherish perfect confidence in His word and Spirit! The Thessalonians were troubled by a misuse of prophecy. Mischievous men, who knew not at all the grace of God, troubled and shook their

souls by a false apprehension of the day of the Lord—the day of judgment for living men on the earth. It is a total mistake to suppose that their delusion sprang from a too eager or enthusiastic hope of the coming of Christ. The mischief was, that their hope had been displaced and practically annulled by terror from false doctrine about the day. Excited hope was not the delusion, but dread, as if the day of the Lord was present. It was *not* wrong to believe that the day was at hand; but this is not what the false teachers insinuated, nor what the apostle reproves. Our English version, unfortunately, is exceedingly to be regretted here; and I appeal to every scholar with an unbiassed mind whether ἐνέστηκε does not mean "is present" (contrasted often with merely being "at hand," and never really admitting of such a sense). They falsely taught, then, that the day of the Lord was actually come; and this was the delusion (for which they dared to allege a pretended letter of the apostle) that distressed the Thessalonian believers. 2 Thessalonians ii. dissipates the notion.

It is another instance of what our translators occasionally did. They could not make sense of the passage according to the plain meaning of the word, and so they ventured to do what no man ought to do: they gave up the real meaning of Scripture, and substituted another meaning, which they thought would make better sense, and must have been intended. Nobody is at liberty so to deal with God's word: it is not translating, but interpreting. Beloved friends, let us cleave to scripture, whether we understand it or not. If we do not, let us frankly confess our

ignorance, but faithfully adhere to the words before us. What the Thessalonians were drawn into was the idea that the day of the Lord had already come. The false teachers seem to have construed the persecutions under which they were suffering as a proof that the day of the Lord was actually there. This the apostle treats as a falsehood, and the more as they claimed his authority for it. No one ought to listen to these men, nor were they to be troubled about such a rumour. He beseeches them, by their blessed hope of being gathered to the Lord at His coming, not to be frightened by the cry that the day was come.

Why indeed should a Christian be alarmed about anything? He is entitled to look death in the face, and to have boldness in the day of judgment, as John expressly says. And do you think that a man who can honestly and according to the truth and will of God thus contemplate the most solemn certainties of the eternal future should be justly alarmed at anything here below? A Jew or a Gentile ought to dread the tribulation if he faces the revelation of God about it ever so briefly; for the tribulation will be a retributive dealing with the unfaithfulness of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, and especially of those who abuse the name of the Lord. But for this very reason it does not apply to the Christian at all. This is the moral truth of the case, and therefore I may well press it on all who have not duly weighed scripture as to it. I entreat you to cleave to the Lord's name and to His word. Value every help, and seek the best you can. If danger menaced your body, I dare say you would have recourse to those who, as you believe, could do you most good:

I do not think you ought to do less, if the question is of your soul and God's own truth and glory.

May God bless you who believe, and give you hearts truly and humbly to cleave to Him and to the word of His grace, assured that He will exempt, according to His own word, those that keep the word of Christ's patience, and that He will also in the darkest days preserve Jews and Gentiles according to His word through the awful judgments that are coming upon the world.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, PATERNOSTER ROW.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

LECTURES INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY OF THE EPISTLES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE.

Price 7s. 6d.

LECTURES INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY OF THE GOSPELS.

Price 7s. 6d.

LECTURES ON FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS CONNECTED WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Price 3s.

LECTURES ON THE SECOND COMING AND KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Price 4s.

LECTURES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Price 5s.

NOTES ON DANIEL.

Price 1s. 6d.

LECTURES ON THE REVELATION, WITH A NEW TRANSLATION.

New Edition. Price 6s. 6d.

LECTURES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

Price 6s. 6d.

LECTURES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

Price 1s. 6d.

LECTURES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

Price 2s. 6d.

LECTURES ON THE EPISTLES TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND COLOSSIANS.

Price 2s.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE CREATION.

A LECTURE ON GENESIS I. II.

DELIVERED IN LONDON, 15TH MAY, 1869.

W. KELLY.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 28, PATERNOSTER ROW.

Sixpence.

THE CREATION

GENESIS i. ii.

THERE are truths which concern external nature, for which we are indebted to the revelation of God. Creation is one of these. That we are warranted in treating this truth as one which man could only guess after, without a divine revelation, we cannot but infer from the fact that mankind in general doubted about it—nay, even those who had the reputation of being the wisest and greatest of men denying it. There was no country where philosophy had such brilliant names and such extensive cultivation as in Greece; yet perhaps nowhere else was unbelief of creation more prevalent, especially among the philosophers. Aristotle denied it; Plato never understood it. To say who did comprehend, or even so much as conceive it, would be difficult. I deny not that there were those who spoke of it, but with singular darkness, and with evident confusion of mind. And yet it is a truth which, when once it is revealed, man's mind feels that so it must have been, if he really weighs the facts, and submits to their force.

The reason why man, without a revelation, cannot reach up to the creation as a certainty, I suppose to be this,—that man, as such—apart from a higher being—

111767

cannot rise above that which he is himself. He is but a creature. He may reason as to the effects of creation around him; he may arrive at inferences and conclusions—and so he has, as the apostle Paul shows us—of God's eternal power and Godhead. At the same time, as creation is clearly out of the sphere of sense and demonstration, so there can be no certainty of it unless God reveal it. When revealed, it at once accounts for and explains that which is before the eyes of all.

Men have raised many difficulties about creation. There is nothing so easy, even for a child, as to put questions hard to solve; but, after all, the difficulties and objections of speculation are generally trifling, when looked into with candour, and fairly confronted with the light of divine truth.

Thus men have asked why creation should be at a certain point of time, why not always. I answer that to say *always* is to deny creation. You assume by your doubt the denial of that which God's word asserts, and which even your reason can find the only key that really unlocks the universe. More than this, creation necessarily implies an exertion of the power of God; for it means that God was pleased to put forth His energy, and to give being to that which had no previous existence. And clearly it belongs to a personal being, as God is, to have a will—consequently, to create when He pleases, how He pleases, and as much or as little as He pleases.

Creation, therefore, is the action of sovereign will to call into being whatever seemed fit to His wisdom. If one used "time" of this, it must be in a large sense; for, strictly speaking, what we call time ordinarily is

duration measured by created objects, after they have been caused to exist by God's power. In ancient times philosophizing Jews found considerable difficulty in bringing in measures of time into their thoughts of creation. Their difficulty was precisely the opposite of that which Gentile philosophers feel now. The modern schools of science demand enormous tracts of time; but they themselves must admit they have made profound mistakes—their own books prove it. They differ not only from their predecessors, but from one another; not only from one another, but from themselves. Give them only a few years, and we find the most confident statements made—by geologists more particularly—refuted, not merely by other writers, but by their own subsequent investigations.

Again, in general it is not a question of disputing their observations, or well-attested facts. These may be interesting and important, as well as solid; the use made of them is another thing. We are entitled to judge their conclusions: they assuredly have done so themselves, with no little freedom; we are entitled on incomparably better grounds, if we have confidence in the word of God, which they have not. Only let us take care, lest we bring, by our own haste or unskilfulness, unmerited blame on that word which we seek to expound. If they have let it slip, if they have dared to despise it, so much the worse for them both now and evermore.

The truth is that scripture is infinitely larger than the systems of men. I shall hope to prove, this afternoon, two things:—that after the beginning there is room for the longest successive lapses of duration;

next, that the ordinary divisions of time are expressly introduced, and this precisely when it suits the character of God's revelation, and His dealings with men. Consequently the word of God leaves ample space for that is true in the systems both of the ancients and the moderns. Here, then, as ordinarily, and I dare to say always, it is only ignorance of scripture, and inattention to it, which have created the difficulty, as they are apt to do.

In short, the portion that has been read gives two great facts: creation at first, apart from those measures of time which belong to the present condition of the heavens and earth; secondly, the introduction of the common course of time, when God is undertaking to prepare an immediate abode for man on the earth. Thus, then, is met the Alexandrian theory, as of Philo, who thought it derogatory to God to suppose literal time in creation.* His conception of the divine energy was an instantaneous result. The moderns have reduced God to a being rather more like themselves. For man undoubtedly would be a long time making such a world as this, and so is ready to imagine that God must have been a long time too. I do not say that there is much to boast of, either in ancients or in moderns; but the fact is that there seems to be a true element in both these suppositions. The mischief is that neither has been rightly understood, and that one has been set

* Philo, in his treatise on the Mosaic account of creation, does not go further than saying that the six days were said for the sake of arrangement, to which number is allied, of which he curiously thinks "six" is perfection. But in his first book of Allegories, he will have it that Moses wrote Gen. ii. 4 to leave the time undefined, and so to exclude the idea that the universe came into being in six days.

gainst another; whereas both, duly applied, have a solid existence in fact, and in the revelation of God's Word. But we must distinguish and not confound them.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." If God had been bound to create at any moment before that in which He was pleased to call into being the heavens and the earth, His character must have been denied; He would not thus be the Absolute after all. For absolute means that He is not tied to conditions. That He was pleased, therefore, to exert His own divine energy at the particular time when He chose flows from the very fact that He is God. Even a man has a will. Is God to be deprived of His will? What sort of a God would that be?

"In the beginning," then, "God created the heaven and the earth." Observe the careful abstinence here from measures of time that belong to man. It is now well known, that not the heavens only but the earth had an existence and suited condition when man was not upon it,—when it might be utterly impossible, according to the facts that we know about its circumstances, for man to be there, or for any animated nature to subsist,—followed by vast but gradual changes, as well as sudden convulsions destructive of such living things as did afterwards exist. For such crises and changes there were, if there be anything ascertained in the "uncertain science," as one called it who was himself one of the chief contributors to the riches of physical knowledge. And an uncertain science it truly is. Humboldt, we may be sure, did not mean to slight any real fruit of man's mind. If there be, then, anything certain in

the uncertain science of geology, it is this, that there were immense tracts of duration when man did not exist upon the earth. God's word leaves ample space for them. "In the beginning" fixes the commencement of the universe indeed, but admits of eras of indefinite extent, and this before the confusion described in the following verse, still more of course before the six days, whose course begins with verse 3.

To what use He applied them—what were the particular constitution, phase and denizens of the earth during one space or another, God has not seen fit to lay before us in His word. This is no defect in scripture: that it lies open to such a charge flows from one of its excellencies. The word of God was never meant to be a book of human science. Nevertheless, when science ceases to be uncertain, when it is no longer a heap of hypotheses, one displacing and destroying another, in the measure in which it becomes really entitled to the rank of science, and attains any degree of consistency as a branch of knowledge, it never fails to pay homage to the word of God. I do not speak of every individual who cultivates it. Far from that. But it seems to me true of science itself. And unquestionably men who have largely advanced its domains in all directions have not been the least loud in their acknowledgment of God's word, when it speaks of that which they are generally considered to know best. There are none in this room who would dispute the place of a Newton or a Cuvier. They were not backward in owning the value of scriptural truths. Remember, I do not bring in the names of these great men as if it could be any triumph for the cause of God. It was their gain to bow to

His word, which really cast lustre on them, not they on it.

So always it is. There is no man but what derives all his blessing, if he be wise, through God's word from God Himself. Sir Isaac Newton, for instance, did not degrade the science of which he was one of the most illustrious ornaments by denying God or dishonouring His word. Not that the prince of natural philosophers understood the word of God well—I do not think he did. It was not given to him to sound the depths of scripture to any remarkable extent. He can scarcely be deemed correct as to his views of creation; for his idea was that God in the first place created crude masses of matter.* Very likely such is the notion among many to this day; if so, it is a serious error, which derives no countenance from the word of God. What scripture says is that in the beginning God created "the heaven

* "It seems probable to me that God, in the beginning, formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable particles, of such sizes and figures, and with such other properties, and in such proportions to space, as most conduced to the end for which He formed them.

"By the help of this principle all material things seem to have been composed of the hard and solid particles above mentioned, variously associated in the first creation by the counsel of an intelligent Agent; for it became Him who created them to set them in order. And if He did so, it is unphilosophical to seek for any other origin of the world, or to pretend that it might have arisen out of chaos by the mere laws of nature; though being once formed it may continue by these laws for many ages.

"Space being infinitely divisible, and matter not being necessary in all places, it may be also allowed that God is able to create particles of matter of several sizes and figures, and in several proportions to space, and perhaps of different densities and forces, and thereby to vary the laws of nature, and make worlds of several sorts in several parts of the universe. At least I see nothing of contradiction in all this."—*Horsley's Newton*, vol. iv. pp. 260, &c.

and the earth." Do these latter terms mean masses of matter? Heaven is not masses of matter, nor earth either. When scripture says God created the heaven and the earth, it means what it says. God did *not* create a mass of undigested materials. We may presume Sir Isaac got this from Ovid, certainly not from the Bible. Most school-boys have imbibed the same idea; for even the greatest of men may sometimes be affected by that which influences the child at school. Few of us sift our sources of thought enough to discern how much we are tinctured, especially by heathen poets and philosophers. There is no man necessarily above such an influence. It would be only flattering ourselves to fancy that any man here could pretend to such an immunity. I should be sorry, indeed, to give the slightest ground to suppose it to be a question of man against man. My present task is to vindicate God's word, no matter who the person is that [illegible] it. Let his reputation be what it may, God is above him, and His word is infinitely wiser than that which any man has written without inspiration. Scripture never knows what it is to correct itself; it corrects all others and their words, let them be the greatest philosophers or who they may.

God's word then asserts, that in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth. I admit that it was not the heavens in the sense in which we afterwards read of them, in the course of the second day (verses 6–8). It was not the earth in the state in which, when the waters were finally gathered into seas, man was to live on the dry land. Nor is there any reference to man or even to any other animal in this primary men-

tion of the earth (verse 1). All is left strikingly open. If science has made discoveries here, let her humbly seek to prove them. Let her remember the cosmogonies of olden time and not be too hasty. Above all, let her not be in a hurry to contradict the Bible. She will be wiser if she curbs her spirit and seeks a docile mind; otherwise she will find out her humiliating mistake before long. When things get settled down into their places, and the various discoveries acquire shape, and are generalized into laws that carry conviction everywhere, like the principle of gravitation; when geology, arrives (if ever it should) at such a place as its far more exact sister, astronomy, I do not doubt that her obeisance to the Bible will be more complete than it is now. Not that I expect such progress; yet it is not for any one to predict what may be in reserve. But this is certain, that scripture asserts the grand truth that God gave being to the heaven and the earth, without connecting this with time as measured by man, still less of course by history.

Consequently the common idea of putting the creation of the world some six thousand years ago is a mere blunder. The Bible is in no way responsible for it. Where does scripture say so, or anything approaching to it? It is only the annotator at the beginning of the Authorised Version who joins B.C. 4004 with Genesis i. 1. I do not doubt that the margin was thus supplied by men, excellent, learned, and with pious intentions. But it is only man, not God, who dates creation from Tisri or September 1st. And this is the blessedness of the Bible, that we have in itself that which corrects the best of men who laboured on it with

the best means and desires.* Is this a loss? To my mind an immense boon, especially to those who boast of no wisdom except that which the Bible gives them. The Bible—and this is its boast and ours—is the book for all, be they the simplest or the most ignorant. The Bible—and where is there the appearance of such another book,—can correct the best wisdom that man has ever laid up, not merely outside, but from the Bible itself. The Bible, then, nowhere puts creation in connection with Adam,—expressly not; nor is it in connection with animated being, with beasts, or birds, or fishes, or reptiles, nor even with the grass and fruits of the earth. It simply affirms what man never knew as a certainty without the Bible, that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Then the second verse puts us in presence of another great fact, which has been, no doubt, illustrated by geologists, but in no way are we indebted to them for ascertaining it. Here it is in the Bible without them, and before geology was heard of: "And the earth was without form, and void." It is clearly a condition totally different from the first verse. Not a word about the *heaven* being without form, and void; the *earth* alone was so. Some, no doubt, have found a difficulty because of the word "*and*" (!) being introduced, as if it linked the second verse with the first in point of time; but this is all a mistake. If the word "*and*" had not

* Thus even Bishop Horsley writes, in his *Biblical Criticism*, i. 111: "The creation of the world, as it is described in the first chapter of Genesis, was not a single instantaneous act, but a work performed by gradual stages in the time of six successive days, or entire revolutions of the globe of the earth upon its axis."

been here, the first verse might have been taken for a sort of summary of all the rest of the chapter; and thus hasty readers, and preachers, and commentators have been too disposed to treat it in expounding the chapter. They imagined that God's creating in the beginning was set out in detail under the various days that afterwards follow; but that little conjunction precludes such an interpretation. Compare such statements elsewhere, as for instance, in Genesis v.: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." There we have the absence of the conjunction. The reason is that the first words are an abstract of that which the rest of the chapter brings before us. Had there been no "*and*" at the beginning of the second verse of the first chapter, the common (or at least what used to be the common) construction might plead some show of reason for itself, as far as the language of Moses is concerned. There might have then been an impeachment of the accuracy of the divine record. As it stands, there is thorough and manifest correctness. The only persons that have made mistakes are either Christians with upright wishes, who have merely attached their own erroneous notion to the scripture, or men of science who similarly mis-reading it have forthwith sought to malign it. There was no just ground for either; the fault was in both, not in God's word.*

* If the LXX. meant δέ in an adversative sense, as many have done since, I believe them mistaken, and that the conjunction is simply a particle of connexion. The true interpretation is confirmed by the substantive verb which in Hebrew is never, as often in English and

"And the earth was without form, and void." This is a second fact. There is no limitation of the space that intervened between the original creation of heaven and earth in verse 1, and the dreary ruin depicted in the earlier clause of verse 2. We are not told what were the grounds on which God dissolved the fabric of the earth He had created, and brought it into the chaotic condition so strikingly set forth. But I repeat my assertion that the creation of a chaos, or the existence of a chaos as a primeval state, is a heathen and not a biblical thought. What the Bible says is quite inconsistent with such an idea. "Heaven and earth," we have seen, does not mean chaos, but a state of things with an order necessarily distinguishing them. What use God may have made of the earth as it originally came from His fiat is another question, and our curiosity is not indulged by the Bible. The fact, however, is certain; and it is a fact of the utmost moment, and of very great interest in its place. All the facts that have been discovered of the earliest conditions of the earth fall in with it; that is to say, they point to a time when the animal, or even vegetable kingdom, when life in its lowest forms, as yet had no existence on the globe. Is there no difficulty then? I grant you that man has the utmost possible difficulty in arriving at anything more than a First Cause. What the nature of that First Cause is, how can he tell? The very

other tongues, a mere copula. The *facts*, therefore, of verses 1 and 2 are connected; the *times* are kept expressly separate. In the beginning (let it be ever so far back) was the creation; subsequently—but how long after is not said—was the chaotic confusion of the earth. Here Dr. Kennedy (*Donnellan Lectures*, ii. 12, &c.) seems to be in evident error.

same principle that leads him to feel there must be a First Cause forbids his understanding it. The reason of this too it is not hard to see. Man himself infers a first cause, but he, a caused being, never can *per se* understand a first cause that is not caused. It is outside and above the sphere and nature of his own being. There man feels, and alas! would hide, his own ignorance. But here in Scripture all is plain. We are told that all things above and below had a First Cause, and that He who caused them to be was God, who by the absolute act of His own will was pleased so to create (verse 1). Then (verse 2) follows another fact—all the earthly part of the creation completely dissolved, and in hopeless confusion. I shall prove that scripture refers to the same words elsewhere; never as the original state, but a state to which God was pleased to reduce the object in question. The importance of this cannot be overestimated in such a theme as the present.

Thus in Isaiah xxxiv. 11 we have these same expressions once more. In describing the judgment upon the land of Edom, we read, "The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion (תֹהוּ), and the stones of emptiness" (בֹּהוּ). No man can say that this is a description of the original state of the land of Edom: it is a condition to which God's judgment brought it down. This, then, confirms the interpretation already given of Genesis i. 2. The second verse is brought in as an additional statement to the first (not an exhibition of the state which was before us in the first verse). But, further, the use made of the terms elsewhere (as Isaiah xxxiv.) shows that

they suit there a condition to which God consigned what He had made, and certainly do not describe that in which He made or created it.

Again Jeremiah iv. 23 refers to these same terms, and clearly in allusion to Genesis. There the prophet writes in view of the land of Israel and the judgments impending,—"I beheld the earth" (it was a prophetic vision), "and, lo, it was *without form, and void;* and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled." That is, it is not at all a vision looking back to a primeval condition, but one that looks onward to the utter desolation with which God would visit a particular land, the terms being pointedly chosen from the second verse of Genesis i. What I gather is very simple:—that there is an analogy in the use to which the Spirit of God applies His own words; that Gen. i. 2 is a description of the state, not in which God made the earth, but to which He was pleased subsequently to reduce it.

I may be met by the objection that this represents God as capricious. Far be the thought! Was not, is not, He that made the heavens and the earth all-wise? Ah! it would have been a poor thing for man, as he is now, if God had not broken up the earth:—an imperfect provision, if He had not convulsed it, and many a time too. I am not prepared to endorse, still less to oppose, what men of science, who had, as far as I am aware, no thought of illustrating the Bible, have affirmed as to the number and character of the pre-Adamite convulsions. There is one that I could name among the

most exact and comprehensive of modern writers on palæontology, and he, if I recollect aright, affirms that some nine and twenty times the crust of this earth was broken up, before man was made to dwell here below; that nine and twenty times there have been successive acts of God's power, in bringing in what was new on the basis of the breach of the old. And suppose you that all this was arbitrary? Certainly I am not going in anywise to bind my faith or yours to that which M. D'Orbigny says, however competent he may have been to give a grave and ripe judgment. Convulsions may have happened nineteen times, or nine and twenty, or thirty-nine.

To my mind it is rather a precarious affirmation, the exact number on a point so delicate and difficult to ascertain with precision. Nevertheless, the general outline I cannot but hold to be as sure a series of facts as any other in geological science—that God was pleased to form successive deposits, and after each—or, at any rate, at intervals—violently to break up the surface that He formed. And so far from this being without a worthy purpose, it was the evidently wise course of things, if He destined the earth—after these vast geological eras—to become the home of man, or at least the sphere for man's activity and responsibility in such a world as this. How else would man have reached what lay in the bowels of the earth? How else could he have availed himself, for instance, of the buried coal measures? How else could he have turned to account the minerals deposited in its depths? How else could he have quarried the lime, the marbles, and other stones concealed there? On the one hand, all this

chain of successive convulsions was requisite for man, when formed on the earth; but on the other hand, it was entirely incompatible with man, or indeed, any other being, when living on the face of the earth; because these violent disruptions, of course, would have been fatal, as they were when various genera and species of living creatures did exist at each epoch when the crash took place; and consequently the tale is told by the vast beds of fossilized objects, as we all know—when God laid down not merely unstratified formations, but strata with an ascending scale of organic being, before the Adamic earth.

But all this was not without a beneficent design marked with the utmost wisdom and goodness too, as all that God does and says must be. So that although He was pleased here to pass over these geologic eras silently, leaving it to man who was about to avail himself of means to discover such facts by his observation, and by that mind with which God had endowed him, yet He has left ample verge for all in verse 2. It was natural that man should survey that world on which he was made, and of which he was constituted the lord. One can understand that man goes forth and enters with interest into the conditions of the world that was put under him; for things here below were his proper domain. Naturally therefore man seeks to understand the world which has been set in his heart (Eccles. iii. 11), where he finds himself now an inhabitant. It is perfectly certain that all the previous states differed more or less from each other, as they were totally different from the conditions in which man was made and tested in Eden.

Let me here state another patent fact. It is after all

this that the days come in. It is quite a mistake to count them long periods. They are nothing of the sort. I see no reason to doubt that they are simple cycles of twenty-four hours. If long periods had been meant, do you think that God would have spoken about "the evening and the morning"? Such a phrase would be an extraordinary formula for introducing any other than a natural day. That there were long periods may be quite true; but then they are left room for, and not described. They would come in before if not after the state described in verse 2—once certainly, and perhaps twice. There might be suites of long periods for aught we know. It does not appear, as far as my reading goes, that there is anything of real trustworthiness as to these periods except the general fact, which is a matter of fair inference from what has been turned up here below. But here it is, and here only, in my opinion, that you must insert these long eras. Grant that there may have been forty thousand years for one period, what is there to alarm in that? Be it so: I care not how many millions of years you claim. Supposing that scheme true, there is room for the geologic ages; scripture says nothing to the contrary, but leaves abundant space for all, and so much the more remarkably because at first sight such interstices might be easily passed over.

It is not the part of wisdom for a Christian to deny facts. Why reject the phenomena which indicate states not only of the earth, but of living creatures there before Adam was made, *i.e.* before the six days? Otherwise, how can we escape the supposition, that God was pleased to make vast quantities of fossilized objects,

giving the appearance of having lived on the earth, which never did? Are you prepared to accept the notion that God studiously gave a semblance of that which was not true? There are remains of animals, and animals too that were evidently made with distinct objects, and with characteristics altogether different from those of any animals to be found now, and supposing a correspondent state of things (as for instance, when the world was a vast marsh and enormous heat prevailed). There is no ground whatever to doubt these facts. I do not see that a Christian shows his wisdom, or his faith either, by denying anything of the sort. Granted that being unrevealed it is not a point for faith; it is a thing that man must ascertain and prove if he can, and thus it is a question of knowledge or ignorance. One cannot talk correctly about faith in science. Faith has nothing to do with science, nor again has science with faith. What the scientific men have to do is to collect and marshal their facts; then let them and others judge their conclusions. This does not appear to me at all arrogant,—but what every soul who can ought to do—every one who takes the trouble of making himself master of the facts they present. It does not follow that the most diligent and successful collectors of facts are the best deducers from them. This may or may not be. A wise man has not a word to say against science itself or known facts. I do complain of the precipitancy and evident animus with which many men have chosen to use what they could in an unformed and crude state of science to contradict the word of God. Neither wisdom nor reverence appears in such ways.

Thus, we have now had the two grand facts with

which the chapter opens—the original creation, and, secondly, another separate fact, but the next that is stated,—the chaotic condition into which the earth was reduced, and, as far as the analogy of scripture shows, by God's act—by His judgment—for wise reasons.

But there is more evidence still. There is a passage in Isaiah which seems to me formally to contradict the notion that God created the earth in a state of chaos. As to heaven it is not pretended; it is only a question of the earth. We shall best see the importance of this by and by. Now, in a well-known passage of Isaiah (xlv. 18), the Spirit of God is explicit that God did not make the earth in the chaotic condition which is familiar to all the readers of ancient mythology. It is a statement which made a considerable impression on my own mind, because in it the Spirit of God seems distinctly to contradict the idea that the earth was created in emptiness or confusion. "For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it: he hath established it; he *created it not in vain:* he formed it to be inhabited." Our translators in using the expression "in vain" evidently turned aside from the literal import. The fact is, it is very much more forcible when taken in connection with the passage in Genesis i. 2. One of the terms Moses employed in verse 2 is used by Isaiah, who declares that Jehovah did *not create* the earth *so.* What conclusion can one draw but that Moses described an after state, and not the primary result of God's creation? The traditional interpretation sets the legislator at variance with the prophet, and must be abandoned for the view already given, which maintains their per-

fect harmony. When created, God did not create the earth a waste; when it became such, it was a subsequent state.

There is another fact also on which I would just desire to say a word—the remarkable precision of the terms that the Spirit of God has used on this subject. Hebrew is not by any means a copious language, but is comparatively poor. It is not at all equal to our own in possessing shades of synonym; but for all that it is worthy of note that, as to the matter now in hand, which was to be conveyed by revelation to man, the language that the Holy Ghost first employed has materials which, for precision, as far as I know, are found in none other. Consider how the terms which we translate "creating," "making," "forming" or "fashioning," here and elsewhere, are used—with what force and appropriateness—in the word of God.

It may help to put this in a clear light before those ignorant of it if we turn to Exodus xx., which, perhaps, may be in the minds of some as bearing out the common notion that the earth was created in six days. In the eleventh verse of that chapter it is written, "In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." No doubt a great many people, in the habit of hearing this, have confounded it with the opening words of Genesis i. But there is a marked difference, instead of any such confusion. If scripture said that Jehovah *created* heaven and earth in six days, there would be reasonable ground for the thought. Nowhere is such an assertion to be found in the word of God. What we do find is the *creation* of heaven and earth in the

beginning; but when you come to the six days, it is the *making* of heaven and earth. So manifest is the difference at once. "Create" (בָּרָא), if we are to distinguish the words, refers to the efficient cause; "make" (עָשָׂה) points to the formal cause; and they have another word (יָצַר), which brings in the material.

It is very evident, therefore, that Hebrew—poor a language as it may be in some respects—is exquisitely precise in these very particulars. No doubt the reason is obvious. It was God's pleasure to reveal His mind as to the outward creation in the Hebrew tongue. And what makes it the more striking is, that Greek—which is such a finely expressive language in most other respects—seems to fail not a little in this. They had no words at all competent to express these shades of meaning. They were driven to other ways of putting the idea. There is always a possibility in every tongue of expressing thought; but this may, in some cases, require a circuitous method. In John i. 3 we have creation alluded to. In the first verse we read: "In the beginning was the Word"—clearly this ascends, as often noticed, before Genesis i. 1. In the one beginning God *acted;* in the other the Word *was*, the uncreated expresser of God, before His power was put forth to call anything or one into being—the Word that was with God, and that was God. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him." There is a beautiful exactness in the Greek expression, that is not found in the English. Ἐγένετο is not adequately answered either by the Hebrew or the English "made." Properly speaking, it does not mean anything of the sort, but "caused to be." The Word gave to all things existence.

This seems to be the best Greek method of expressing creation, if it can be expressed in that tongue by one word. "All things were brought into being by him; they began"—or, rather, "were *caused to be*"—"by him." Such is the force of the term. But this does not at all match the admirable excellence of the Hebrew tongue, where we have God's own absolute act referred to. Such is the essence of the word "create," and consequently it is invariably attributed to God. We never read of any created being of whom it is predicated, unless in a figure or evident accommodation. It could not be applied to the act of a creature. Not that it always means created out of nothing. It is the word for this, but not for this only. Hence it is applied to the fifth day's work—the first production of animal life for the Adamic world (verse 21), and still more emphatically to that latest task of the sixth day, when God gave being to the chief of this lower creation (ver. 27). We ought always to gather the value of a word from its usage; to the use that scripture makes of it we may wisely, and must implicitly, bow.

Thus, without going farther, this very chapter of Genesis shows that, while the word here translated "create" is proper to describe God's origination of being where there was none before, at the same time it may express a particular act of God's will where there existed materials of which God made use. For instance, where He created the sea animals, and where He created man in the image of God, it is evident that in neither case does it mean without pre-existent materials. Here we know from the account that such there were. The statements of scripture are incon-

sistent, therefore, with the notion that the word *create* invariably means creating out of nothing. At the same time, while this modification of the word's meaning is allowed, it remains true that, if God would express creation in its full import where there was nothing before, this is the word and none other. Where is the word beside so admirably suited to convey it?

If some suppose it a defect that the same word is used with such shades of difference, let me tell them that their objection makes a demand on Hebrew which is not met by any other language—which, if it could be met, would involve mere barbarism even if practicable to be remembered and used; in fact, there is no language where words do not express varieties of meaning. If the most precise of tongues did not admit of some modification in the use of its terms, such a catalogue would be an intolerable burden. If one were bound to use a new word for every new thought, how cumbrous would human speech become! Man would sink under the weight of that which he had to carry in mind, and utter in its proper time and place. But enough of this, which I merely notice to guard the unreflecting from a common misapprehension.

When God, then, expresses not the first origination of the universe, but the constituting of the earth an abode for man, we find the plain fact, that in the six days Jehovah, the God of Israel, is said to have made all things (according to the fourth commandment, which views the whole scene as we have it now, not as primarily created). Accordingly, after the Spirit of God has been brought in as moving upon the face of the waters, we are shown in the six days' work the making

of the earth for man as formed by the hand of God here below.

Let us briefly trace their course. "And God said, Let there be light." Here, again, it is well to direct your attention to the words. A well known critic of antiquity singled out the sentence as a fine instance of the sublime. But there is far more in it. Probably many of my hearers are aware that there have been conflicting theories about light, and that the men of science have not quite settled the question yet among themselves (that is to say, whether it depend on emission from a certain point which you may call the fountain, or whether light be caused to act by vibrations). There is thus a wide discordance between the corpuscular theory and the idea of an undulating ether. Further, it is known that most scientific moderns have been disposed to give up the Newtonian theory of corpuscles in favour of the vibration theory of later date. It may be remarked here that the manner in which God's word introduces the action of light suits the more refined view. For certainly there is a careful abstinence from making an entity of light. It is not put forward as some material thing created, but in such a way as to express a power, whatever its seat might be. Thus the peculiarity of its mention makes it perfectly consistent with the supposition that it is merely produced by undulations of ether.

This is the more remarkable, because no one can pretend that the theory was known. I am aware how scholars have permitted themselves to look down on the sons of Israel. I am aware that to your Tacituses and Gibbons they were the most contemptible of mankind.

I am aware that the poets cannot conceal their bitter scorn. Nevertheless, how comes to pass the startling fact, that there have been heaps of philosophers before and since these scornful poets and historians, ancient or modern, but the only account of creation which survives is found in the simple yet sublime words of the Hebrew Moses? Many of them, if not all, wrote of the universe since Moses; but where will you put C. Ptolemy—one of the greatest names—now? Here shines day by day the same majestic statement in the word of God. The more you seek to degrade the Hebrews, the more you really, though unwittingly, exalt the God who employed them to be the vehicles of communicating what none else knew. Where is any other document of the kind that stands its ground like Genesis i.? If there be, show me it or the man that wrote it. Where is the theory of the earth, up to this year of grace 1869, which has yet given such a graphic, comprehensive, or exact statement? And this is the more admirable, because it is given in a book meant for men, women, and children; in a book expressly designed to cast the light of God on a world involved in moral darkness; in a book capable of being understood from the first day it was written, yet at the same time so written that nothing shall ever be found to contradict it up to the last day.

This is what I claim for the Bible. That anything has ever really contradicted it, on grounds that will bear investigation, I have yet to learn. It has not been for want of will or effort; it has not been for want of learning or science. I do not pretend to be so ignorant as not to have looked into what men have written against

the Bible. I have examined what has been said in ancient as well as modern times. But I have not seen —and I challenge any other person to show me—an account of creation that carries on its own face such an admirable combination. There is a statement of facts that does not go beyond what men in olden time could profit by and understand; and yet not only does it survive all the changing thought of mankind, but it gathers fresh illustration of its truth from the advance of science wherever the latter becomes so mature and fixed as to carry general conviction along with itself.

That a man living at so very early a day (as Moses unquestionably did) has written in the same brief sentence that which one of the greatest wits of antiquity, and finest critics of style, cites as challenging universal admiration for its simple sublimity; and that he has at the same time given his account with an exactness that surpasses what the illustrious Newton displayed, only within a comparatively short remove from our own time —to me is the more gratifying, because it came from the remote history of a very little people in an obscure corner of the earth. It is no use to tell me that Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians. The wisdom of the Egyptians in these matters would have only misled him. Produce me such a testimony of their wisdom, show me from their hieroglyphics, or from any other source you like, that they understood the course of creation as Moses did. There may have been some points common; but they were points common to many others besides Egyptians. They were relics of current tradition, in some way or other generally received. But were the special salient points of

Moses ever endorsed by the philosophers of Greece, Rome, or Egypt? The Egyptians held eternal matter, primeval night, and the origin of their gods from earth and heaven, not the God who in the beginning created them and all things.

It seems to me, then, that the scorn of incredulity is, as usual, exceedingly misplaced; and that Moses must not be viewed as a genius who had by depth of intellect penetrated into nature's secrets. They are not to be rifled thus. Genius may develope itself in poetry; it may happily blossom and bear fruit in a waste of seemingly barren facts. But the facts of creation are an impossibility for mind to conceive and calmly state without exposing itself to successful attacks from all sorts of shafts of a hostile world. Not so! There is One above all the geniuses, scholars, and men of science, who gave them life and breath and all things; He it was who wrote by His servant Moses.

We must take note of another fact also. Why is it that light is introduced here? It is no use to say that it is all according to phenomena. It is not natural to have spoken of it here, unless the allegation were the simple truth. Moses surely had done otherwise had he been writing according to observation. And you know that this is the boasted but really base philosophy of the hour; you are aware that men are now making experience everything, and that what Hume put forth in his scepticism of a former day is now the fashionable empiricism of this day. They call it positivism. No more degrading system ever dragged down men's minds since the world began; nothing will more thoroughly corrupt the hearts. Such was the fate of the early

positivists in heathen times. It will be more deadly now.

But however this may be judged, here we have a fact not discernible by experience at all. And if it be a truth, how was it learnt? Who that merely gathered his thoughts from the world around and above would have brought in light before the sun, moon, and stars? Why then did Moses burden his account of creation by that which was not at all a fact derivable from observation, but rather a difficulty? It is a strange statement at first sight. If it really set forth the truth, it is easily accounted for. Nor am I in the least denying that light may have been caused to act at previous states of the world. It is vain, therefore, to object to scripture, that there were animals before man which had eyes, and consequently saw; that even those little animals (I need hardly say I mean the Trilobites,) that have been discovered soon after the first traces of animal life, noticed in the formations of the Silurian epoch, are remarkable for their singular and powerful structure of vision. There is no doubt of the facts, and I would not weaken their force in the least. Their ocular provision indicates fulness and power. Some of these must have been able to look round about in a way beyond most beings now on the earth. At the same time, all this is not at all inconsistent with the statement of Moses. It is evident that a state of chaos might cause totally different conditions from what had existed before, and might forbid that vibration that was necessary to call out light. But here we find that, after this utter confusion, light is caused to be. If animals existed before those described for the Adamic earth,

there may have been light before also. What is said under the six days is about the earth as it was to be placed under man.

Another thing may be observed. A certain analogy may well have been in part, if not wholly, between the great geological periods, and these six days. You are aware, of course, that Hugh Miller is the popular advocate of this idea, carried out so far as to identify them by making the days mean these vast successive eras. Now it is not for me to speak slightingly of such a man; at the same time, I believe he was mistaken. Do I deny the long periods? Not at all. Do I reject the analogy between them and these days? In no wise. Can we not understand vast periods characterized by God's building up this globe gradually and in successive exertions of His power, and that the six days should go over the work again after the last great catastrophe, before man, only on a circumscribed and very brief scale, for our race to dwell on the earth—yet similar, in certain grand outlines, to that which had occupied God in the immense tracts of duration which preceded Adam? There appears to me not the slightest ground for setting the one thought against the other. Both may be perfectly true, and in point of fact I believe that so it was.

Doubtless you are aware of a comparatively new set of philosophers, more daring in their speculations than the old heathen.* They assert that everything has grown up from a nebula; but what the nebula grew out of no man can tell—not even these experts. Of this only they are sure, that they owe their origin not to God

* See Appendix.

but to a nebula, unless this be their God. I hope to show, before I have done with this chapter, that the scheme is as false as the facts of science are true; that God's word makes all plain, and, in point of fact, falls in with the most thorough and comprehensive observation, as well as with conscience; for conscience has a good deal to do with these matters, though it may not appear so at first sight. There is a will in all this restless speculation. There is a willing ignorance of that which does not suit. There is a desire to get rid of God, and consequently of creation.

As to the notion of development, let me tell you that God has taken pains, both above and below, to expose the falsity. As a general fact, it is quite clear that from the lower classes of being there is an ascending scale. But the moment you make it absolute and exclusive, you contradict facts. I deny the assumption first from this,—that God made angels before He made men. I suppose you will not dispute the fact that angels are a superior class of beings. Now we know for certain, that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together," as Job says, "and all the sons of God shouted for joy." God has taken pains, therefore, to guard against such a system.

This, by the by, illustrates the remarkable ways of God in the Bible. It is not arranged as a mere book of geometry, where one proposition depends on a preceding one, and all form, so to speak, a regularly connected chain. The Bible must be read, and read again and again as a whole; and one grand reason why many make so poor a use of it is, that they cherish favouritism so much as to neglect the greater part of Holy

Writ. And those who teach are apt to have their favourite texts, so that it fares ill with the Bible among both teachers and taught. I do not say that God does not bless the most partial use of His book; but I am sure that it will most amply repay every Christian who reads it as a whole. And let me assure you that the best recipe against infidelity is thus to read the Bible. How many of those who disbelieve it have so read it? That they have read parts of it I can suppose, as well as those who have feebly endeavoured to upset their statements. But it is a rare thing to meet with souls that read all the Bible with a spirit of faith. Many read it as a duty or religious task. Can such as study thus expect to enter in and enjoy? There is a numerous class of persons who get through the Bible in a year, or something of that kind; but this is far short of what I am now urging. Seek to understand the Bible: it is only possible by faith. There is no other way. Not by understanding do we believe, but by faith we understand as well as set to our seal that God is true.

Again, for the dissipation of the dismal idea of development, take the fact of the superiority of the early remains of the Saurian order above existing objects of the same kind. Can they gainsay this? They know it is true. They are perfectly aware that the idea of development in the Saurian order is a fiction, that the superior objects of that family are not those that in point of time followed as the theory would require. A single, positive, and well-defined fact of the kind suffices. No doubt there are others. Without pretending to any minute acquaintance with the subject, I know this much at least, and on their own authority, or rather on facts

which cannot be disputed. Will they say that we should not bow to facts? I do not dispute them, whether it be facts of criticism as to the text of scripture, or ascertained facts in the outward world of science. I do not question that facts have a meaning; but the hypothesis some seek to build upon those facts ought not to be too readily accepted.

We may now pass on to look briefly at the following days. "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven."

How comes this? It is another difficulty at first sight. Did we not hear of heaven in the first verse? To be sure we did; and here we are told of heaven again. What then,—contradiction? Not in the least degree: only another heaven—that is all. And is this, then, not true? Why this other heaven? Because man was about to be made. The circumambient atmosphere, extending upwards too, was essential not only to man's existence here below, but to vegetable life, to the due activity of light and heat, as well as to all forms of animated existence.

We find under the second day, then, the lower heaven. And that this is not a merely Jewish idea, but of God, is perfectly certain from the New Testament; for there we read how Paul was caught up (at any rate "a man in Christ," who, I have no doubt, was Paul) into the third heaven. We can easily understand, therefore, that at the beginning God made two heavens,

and that in this case He made the lowest one. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here we find He made another, man being about to be made. And this is called heaven too. They are all called the heavens. There is the heaven of His presence, the heaven of the stars, planets, and other astronomical objects; and the atmospheric heaven necessary for man and living things here below.

Again we find, as that which occupies the third day, that the waters under the heaven are gathered together to one place, and the dry land appears. "And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas." And then the earth is made to bring forth grass—that lovely array, as it were, for the earth—full of beauty as well as beneficence. "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind."

I grant you that modern science denies genera and species everywhere. Development is in effect a denial of this. The Lamarckian notion, of which we have a representative in a rather celebrated living Englishman, sets it all aside. Do they really gain much by it? I do not see that the blotting out of kinds in fruit-trees or herbs is a great acquisition of science. To me it seems to be a blotting out of the land-marks, not of science only, but of distinctions that date from the workmanship of God. It seems to be thoroughly spurious—merely one of those dark clouds that for a season flit across the horizon of science as over other worlds. It may be fashionable, but this does not make it the better. Here we are told, for God has written, that the different herbs had their kinds. And this is one of the great

facts of the vegetable kingdom. The simplest gardener, that thinks as well as labours, knows this. Since man observed facts on the earth, when was it seen or heard that an apple-tree brought forth pears, or that a pear-tree bore apples? They can prove nothing but the liveliness of their own imagination. These dreamers contradict not only scripture and science, but the facts gathered by observation in every land.

Again, on the fourth day we hear of the luminaries. And here mark the consistency and propriety of the language. It is not said that God then created them, but simply, "Let there be lights in the firmament." It is not light now, but "lights," or light-bearers, "in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night (the stars also)." These last are just referred to, and it was the more important because, as is generally known, many of those that had the greatest weight in the ancient world adored the stars. Even Plato, although a western, was sufficiently tinctured by orientalism to yield to the monstrous figment that the earth is a sort of living creature. As the philosophy of Aristotle directly tended to atheism (for it was low-minded empiricism), so the philosophy of Plato led into, if it was not downright, pantheism. Such was the difference between them. Pantheism, though in sound opposed, is really near akin to atheism.

God here cuts off the ground of all these delusions, as well as the objection of moderns, who too hastily as-

sumed that the stars are said to be created at this time. It is not so. No matter how long the space required for the light from more distant stars to reach the earth, it is evident that room is left for all by what is said, and not said, in verses 1, 14, 16. Had Moses written that they were *created* on the fourth day, it would have contradicted the facts; but as it is expressed, not only there is no contradiction, but obviously the Bible is wiser than either the friends or the foes of revelation. Compare what Moses wrote with any philosopher you please in the ancient world. Whose writings have failed to contradict the facts of modern science? How comes it that Moses did not? Whose care was it that preserved him from here implying—as many divines have been too hasty to say for him—the *creation* of the lights.* A Scotch university professor not long since insisted to me that Moses affirmed it. He was so ready to believe that scripture contradicts science, that he had not even weighed these few words with care. Had Plato or Aristotle written as Moses did, how loud the boasting, and how close the scrutiny, not to "hint a fault," but to set forth the excellence of their philosophy! Scripture needs no apology. All I ask is a more exact attention to the word of God on the part of those who venture to assail it. It would be wiser at least to read it first.

You see where those are that speak about the enor-

* Thus Horsley (*Biblical Crit.* i. 4) says, "Neither the sun nor any of the celestial luminaries were in being when light was produced. For light was the work of the first day; the luminaries of the fourth." Also (p. 5), "The celestial bodies were set in the firmament in their respective places, when they were first created; and they were at the same time appointed to be for lights, to give light upon the earth; and to be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years."

mous length of time necessary for light to be transmitted—though this again is more than they ought to assume—at any rate for the action of light by means of the heavenly orbs. But there is no difficulty whatever. When God created the heavens, did He make them empty? Did He not create also the host of heaven? What about the sun, and moon, and stars? He created them sometime. That they were made we find elsewhere in this chapter; not, I presume, the absolute moment of their creation, but of their being made to serve for the use of man on the earth. What other uses they served we are not there informed. That they were God's handiwork, and for man's use, as creatures of God here below—not objects of worship, as in heathenism, He does explain. Surely there was wisdom in saying this and no more. There was considerate goodness in what He said, and in what He withheld.

On the fifth day the waters were to "bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Here, too, a contradiction, I must tell you, has been discovered by certain critics. Chapter ii. shows that fowl were made out of the earth; but Genesis i. 20, they say, intimates that fowl were made out of the waters. Superficial cavillers! Genesis i. says nothing of the sort, but is perfectly consistent with chap. ii. 19. Look at the margin, not the text, of i. 20 in your common English Bible. The objection is exceedingly illustrative of the danger of reasoning not from scripture, but from a mistake that has crept into a translation of it. The first thing we have always to do is to ascertain the word of God and its meaning as accurately as possible. What this verse teaches is not

that the waters were to bring forth fowl, as it appears to do in our English version; but "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." The flying of the fowl in that sphere is the point, and not the statement that the waters gave birth to them. There is no such intimation in scripture. What men have reasoned on, therefore, is merely their own misconception, and nothing more.

On the next and sixth day we have the land animals produced, and, finally, man made in the image of God, after His likeness, with dominion over the lower creation assigned to them, and God blessing them. But mark the difference. It is only when man is thus about to be made that God says, "*Let us.*" Oh, can you not appreciate the spirit of such a word as this? Can you not admire the way in which God, as it were, sits in council on the creation of man? Can you not judge between the physiologist that would make an ape his progenitor, and the Bible that reveals God thus creating man in His own image? Which is the more noble? Which is the more degrading? Of no other creature is it said, "Let us make," when it was a question of the earth, the sea, nay, of light itself—nothing of the sort. "Light be," said Elohim, "and light was." But as to the others, He wrought, but with no such preface as "Let us make." Here it is for the first and only time: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion." What can be farther from development? Such an idea is altogether foreign; and, indeed, the existence of different races and kinds has been engraved by God most legibly on the world of nature; for although man by his wicked ingenuity

may cross the breed, as *e. g.* of the animals that were put under his dominion, the result is always to induce sterility—the standing witness, on the one hand, against man's meddling, and, on the other, for the order in which God meant His creation to proceed. Thus is set before us succinctly, but plainly, the general course of creation.

A few remarks I would make on chap. ii. before I close. The sabbath day is introduced at the beginning, though in truth the first three verses of chapter ii. belong properly to chapter i. That is, they form a part of the great week of God's work and its rest. And there is a very beautiful connection with this which meets an objection of modern times on which a word may be well bestowed. You are aware that German authors have insisted loudly (whether the idea was originated by them is more than I would say) that we are indebted to different writers for the first book of Moses (just as it used to be the fashion of the Wolffians to divide Homer among I know not how many rhapsodists, though, in point of fact, this created far greater difficulties than it was supposed to remove; for it is far harder to imagine half a dozen Homers than one). One thing is very certain, that Moses, according to these sages, must have been a weak foolish man, who adopted at least two different accounts, without a suspicion of what is to them obvious, that the one writer contradicted the other. Such is the discovery of modern criticism. Let me say what I am sure is the truth on this: I dare not venture to put it forward as an opinion. It seems to me a sin to state anything that rests on the clear testimony of God's word as open

to a doubt. If it is a mere question of your judgment of this fact or that, or your individual estimate of the person putting it forward, or your comparative view of the circumstances passing around, it is an opinion; and of what value can it be? You are yourself the measure of it,—your ability, with your special opportunities, or general experience, and nothing more. But when we come to the word of God, we should pass from the region of human opinions. What distinguishes it is that therein God speaks, and His people, yea, every soul, is bound to hear. For my own part, I am convinced, and I trust you are no less than myself, that God has written His word intelligibly. By this I do not mean that any part of it is according to the measure of man; but that it is all written for man to God's glory, and in His wisdom. Thus, what God has been pleased to put in the plainest possible language may be beyond our fathoming; but at the same time it is not beyond our understanding and enjoying, according to our measure of faith, though we may also find out that it is unfathomable. But ever so deep as it is, and infinitely exceeding man's plummet to reach the bottom, it is as clear as it is profound, and not the mud or shallows of the creature.

I am persuaded, then, that these erudite writers have never gone below the surface of the wonderful introduction of Genesis, and that their speculations are not only idle but ignorant. They tell us that the author of chap. i. was a man that knew, and only knew, Elohim; and consequently they call this the Elohistic document. Then, from chap. ii. 3, because Jehovah-Elohim occurs, they will have this to be the Jehovistic portion, or a sort of mingling of the two—the Elohistic-Jehovistic.

The fact is, that up to Gen. ii. 3 we have God (Elohim), and from verse 4 we have the LORD God (Jehovah-Elohim). But that there were two different and inconsistent writers is gratuitous and false. It was one and the same writer throughout; and, so far from inconsistency, each feature is perfection for its own object. Why, then, the difference? The reason is plain, sure, and instructive. When God presents Himself in contrast with man, or the creature, as the originator of all, the invariable term is God (Elohim). It is the proper word, and always so used throughout scripture. Consequently, if the term "Elohim" had *not* been used by Moses in the first chapter of Genesis, it would have gone to prove that Moses could not be inspired. Exactness of thought requires that the Creator should be presented thus in the broadest form of contrast with the creature. On the other hand, besides being the self-existing originator, the Mighty One that caused to be what was not, God is pleased to enter into relationship with man, and indeed with creation. Now the special term in the Old Testament for relationship is Jehovah.

Besides, there was something peculiar in the manner in which God was pleased to enter into relationship then with man and creation, because all was unfallen. The consequence is that it is neither Elohim alone nor Jehovah alone in Genesis ii. iii., but Jehovah-Elohim. Proofs will appear presently (and they might be increased) that this is precisely what it ought to be, and that any other form of presentation would not so exactly have suited the context. If we suppose (what the chapters themselves assert) that the God of creation was pleased to enter into relationship

with man, and this at first in an exceptional way before sin entered the world, the writer ought to have adopted one title in chap. i. (and none other than Elohim), and another in chap. ii. (and none other than Jehovah-Elohim). No doubt a revolution is stated to have come soon afterwards, when God accordingly changes His name in order to suit that altered state. After the fall He simply calls Himself Jehovah. Thus the writer, being inspired (and probably far beyond his own measure of understanding the force of all he wrote), does not present the combined form in the way that is found in chapters ii. and iii., where we have first the relationship and then the test and fall.

Consequently it is evident that the true key to the use of these terms is not the supposition of two or three different writers or documents, followed by a stupid compiler who did not perceive their mutual inconsistency. The very reverse is the truth; Moses—wise as he was—had an infinitely higher than human or Egyptian wisdom to guide him in all he wrote. None but God could have so furnished and so guided him. With all the advantages of observed facts on every side, with the incomparably greater privilege of the fullest subsequent revelation, we are but learning better in our own age the unspeakable value of what Moses wrote in that early day. I do not believe that this is because Moses rose in stature so highly above all men, from his day to ours, but because the only true God inspired Moses and all the other writers of the Bible.

The truth, then, is that in this chapter ii. you will find everything savours of, or chimes in with, the establishment of relationships. "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created,

in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." Observe that there is creation, and also making. This is precisely right, creation having the first rank, and making the subsequent place. "And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Why is this introduced in chapter ii. rather than in chapter i.? For I affirm that you could not transplant this into the first chapter, and that the true cause depends, not upon a different writer, but upon quite another object and line of truth. The design here is not to show man made a creature, though at the head of creation. This is the subject-matter of the first chapter; and there his dominion is fixed by God, and pointed out by the sacred historian. But in the second chapter the aim is not merely to bring out that God made man, as He made every other creature, out of the dust of the ground (reminding him of the humility of his origin), but that he had that which came direct from God in a way no other animal had.

Into whose nostrils did Jehovah-Elohim breathe the breath of life? Into man's, and man's alone. We have no reason to think it was so with angels even. The man who was made out of the dust of the ground was not in full proper relationship with God until God breathed the breath of life into him. On this depends the immortality of the soul; and all who dispute or doubt

this truth* fritter away its singular weight. Nor is it confined to such errorists. Those who have read Bp. Jos. Butler's works know that the great moralist failed to solve the difficulty of man's partaking in the resurrection, while other animals do not. There lies the secret. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and thus it was he became a living soul. Every other animal became a living soul materially and without this. Man alone of all that live on the earth stands in immediate relationship to God. He may sin against Him, and he, consequently alone of all on earth, will be lost for ever. Thus the very fact that he has the breath of the LORD God in his nostrils will be the ground of his misery consequent on eternal exclusion from God. That God breathed into man, and he thus became a living soul, constitutes man's capacity for blessedness through belief of the truth, and for being so brought into the presence of God, as it is his misery when banished from Him for the rejection of Christ into the blackness of darkness for ever.

Thus when we are informed simply about creation, we hear of Elohim; when it is not Elohim, but Jehovah-Elohim, we have moral relationship; for Jehovah, I repeat, is the characteristic name of relationship in the Old Testament, as Father is in the New. In the New Testament, indeed, it is not only a God who has a

* Their arguments are for the most part the unintelligent misapplication of Old Testament texts that treat of the present life, or death, to that which is outside the world and everlasting. Thus "Thou shalt surely die," and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," are applied by them to deny the soul's unceasing existence; whereas they speak solely of God's government in this life. The New Testament has brought to light not only life and incorruptibility, but the second death and eternal judgment. The wages of sin is death, but not death only; for after death comes the judgment.

people, but a Father who has a family. That His Son became a man to die and rise again has made it possible for God, by redeeming grace, to bring us into the place of children and sons; and consequently our proper term of relationship to God is children, as His relationship to us is that of Father. But in the Old Testament Jehovah was the term revealed in due time.

Mark how all the chapter carries out the leading idea. First, we have his relationship to God in the matter of the garden, which was to be kept; but, besides, there was a moral test—he must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why (let me ask) was not this given in the first chapter? Because that chapter does not enter into moral relations; the second has it, because it does. Here we are in the presence of the solemn truth that God is Jehovah-God; that He is not merely a Creator, but establishes the creature, man, in relationship with Himself. Thus it is not only the Absolute, but He who is absolute chooses to form relationships between the creature and Himself. Not in the first chapter, but in the second, is this spread out before us livingly. The whole chapter proceeds on this ground.

Next we have here, and here alone, the animals brought for Adam to name. Thus is shown his relationship to those inferior to himself. He was the one to whom they belonged. There is nothing like this in the first chapter—no bringing of animals to receive their names from Adam; yet we see how consistent it is with the grant of dominion from Elohim recounted in that chapter.

To my mind this, as far as it goes, is just perfection as the word of God must be, instead of the hotch-potch

of blunderers who strung together the inconsistent traditions of their own dark days. Such is what self-complacent unbelief has made of it. It appears to me that these critics are alike objects of horror and of compassion, and that what the Christian would desire for them is forgiveness from Him whose word they defame, because their incredulity has rendered them incapable of comprehending it. There is another, and only another, relationship that I will speak of, and this is the one that is last brought before us in the chapter. Relationship to God we have seen tested by the tree. Adam was to till the garden, and keep it, using all freely, but with his obedience tested by a single restriction. Then relationship to the creature is seen, where the various animals were brought before him to be named. But there was a help-meet wanted. How did God meet this need? In a way admirably wise, not by an absolutely fresh creation, but by forming a portion of the man into a woman, thus reminding him what the woman was and should be towards him—that she was part of himself.

Who, beforehand, could ever have thought of such a way? Who does not feel the beauty and appropriateness of the work and the word of God? How vain and unworthy the notions of the heathen as to all this! Alas! I know that some have sunk so low as to mock at this very fact, and the record of it. Perhaps they may never have known their duty toward the women dependent on them (and, if so, sure to be degraded by them). But the word of God puts everything in its place, and reminds the man, and the woman too, of that special relationship; for there was but the man and the woman—not one man and two women, but only one man and one woman. From the begin-

ning it was so; to the end it ought not to have been otherwise. Thus it was God made them; and this the Son of God cited to vindicate His Father, putting guilty selfish man to shame. But He also made the woman out of man, and man discerned the fact at once. Though he had been in a sleep, he had an instinctive sense how matters stood.

Thus everything was in chapter ii. put in its proper place—the relationship of man with woman, as before with the inferior creation, and with God Himself.

May the Lord bless all His word, and give us unfeigned confidence in all that He has written, without losing the sense of being learners! If God has given us power to teach in our little measure, may this never take us out of the place of discipleship! It is only "in part" that any of us know; and I am sure that we ought to abound in forbearance—forbearance in everything short of dishonour to Christ, yea, even this where it may be done ignorantly, provided it be not deliberate persistent rejection of the testimony of God. May that which has been just brought before you contribute, however little, to the help of the children of God; and may it win the confidence of those that are not children of God, exposing foolish speculation under the garb of wisdom, but a wisdom that is as hollow as man himself is without God!

APPENDIX.

I ought perhaps to except the Phœnician theology of Sanchoniatho. Is it not striking that he who is considered to be the earliest writer of the heathen world should be approached so closely by the most recent form of the apostate philosophy of Christendom? that at least modern geology shows such

strong tendency to relapse into ancient cosmogony—philosophy in general into naturalism? It need hardly be said that the original we have not, but only some fragments of the Greek translation executed by Philo Byblius, for which we are indebted to the citation of Eusebius. (*Præp. Evang.* i. 10.) Τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴν ὑπετίθεται ἀέρα ζοφώδη καὶ πνευματώδη, ἢ πνοὴν ἀέρος ζοφώδους, καὶ χάος θολερὸν, ἐρεβῶδες· ταῦτα δὲ εἶναι ἄπειρα καὶ διὰ πολὺν αἰῶνα μὴ ἔχειν πέρας. ὅτε δέ, φησιν, ἠράσθη τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν ἰδίων ἀρχῶν, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγκρασις, ἡ πλοκὴ ἐκείνη ἐκλήθη πόθος. αὕτη δὲ ἀρχὴ κτίσεως ἁπάντων. αὐτὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκε τὴν αὐτοῦ κτίσιν, καὶ ἐκ τῆς συμπλοκῆς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο Μώτ. τοῦτο τινές φασιν ἰλύν· οἱ δὲ, ὑδατώδους μίξεως σῆψιν· καὶ ἐκ ταύτης ἐγένετο πᾶσα σπορὰ κτίσεως καὶ γένεσις τῶν ὅλων. "He supposes the beginning of the universe was a dark and windy air, or a breeze of dark air, and a turbid Erebus-like chaos; and that these things were infinite, and for a long time had no bound. But when the wind fell in love with its own principles, and a mixture took place, that embrace was called longing. And this was the beginning of the creation of all things. But it knew not its own creation; and from its embrace with this wind came Mot. This some call mud; others the rotting of a watery mixture; and from this came all the seed of creation, and the generation of the universe." Richardson gives us just the same in his edition of *Sanchun. Hist. Phoen.* l. i. p. 8 (save indeed that he reads οὖν for οὐκ [not] in the fifth line as cited above). It is unnecessary to quote the still wilder details that follow on the animals without sense, out of which come intelligent ones called Zophasemin (*i.e.* spectators of heaven), moulded in the shape of an egg, when Mot shone out, and sun and moon, and stars small or great.

If the Hermetic creed, transcribed by Jamblichus and popularly known in I. P. Cory's *Ancient Fragments*, could be depended on as the theology of Egypt in days as early as those of Moses, the contrast between Genesis and what we can gather of Egyptian lore would be less striking than it is. But there is strong ground to infer that this, like other productions attributed to Hermes, is due to the Neo-Platonists, who garnished the reveries of the heathens with ideas borrowed from the apostolic writings, in order the more effectually to oppose Christianity. The writings which reflect the real opinions of the Egyptian world have but a negative

and melancholy interest for the Believer. They illustrate and confirm the truth of St. Paul's account in Romans i. But they have as little solid value as the assaults of our own day, on the word of God.

In conclusion let me say, that substantially Mr. Darwin, without knowing it probably, lands through unbelief in a like conclusion with the old Phœnicians. "In all organic beings, as far as is at present known, the germinal vesicle is the same, so that every individual organic being starts from a common origin. Professor Asa Grey has remarked, the spores and other reproductive bodies of many of the lower algæ may claim to have first a characteristically animal, and then an unequivocal vegetable, existence. Therefore, on the principle of Natural Selection with divergence of character, it does not seem incredible, that from some such low and intermediate form both animals and plants may have been developed; and if we admit this, we must admit that all the organized beings which have ever lived upon earth may have descended from some one primordial form." Thus "Natural Selection" (with "Struggle for Life," one may add from elsewhere) is the substitute for God, and the spores of the lower sea-weed are the materials of the modern hylology, which are imagined to develope into all the forms of the vegetable and the animal kingdoms till man is reached. And this childish dream, reproducing itself in the dotage of the nineteenth century, (which its own author may well call "profound ignorance of the mutual relations of the inhabitants of the earth during the many past epochs of its history,") claims to be the ripest fruit of the science of this age! It is old Epicureanism again, with its denial of a God who works all things according to His own will. Divine design is excluded; material transmutation takes its place, "the sequence of events as ascertained by us." It is easy to hide ignorance, wilful ignorance, of creation under such an expression as "Natural Selection," and to think that we give an explanation when we only utter folly.

London: W. H. Broom, [illegible] Cornoster Row.

00111767

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016